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Nick Carter Stories

DRIVEN FROM COVER

-OR-

Nick Carter's Double Ruse

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NICK CARTER STORIES

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DRIVEN FROM COVER;

Or, NICK CARTER'S DOUBLE RUSE.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

CAUSE FOR SUSPICION.

Nick Carter waited, listening intently, listening vainly, with his desk telephone in his hand and the receiver at his ear.

Chick Carter, the celebrated detective's chief assistant, sat watching him, noting each changing expression on his strong, clean-cut face, and wondering what occasioned it.

It was about nine o'clock one evening in October, and both detectives were seated in the library of Nick Carter's spacious residence in Madison Avenue.

"Hello!" Nick now called quite sharply. "Hello!"

No answer.

"What's the trouble?" Chick inquired. "Don't you get a reply?"

"No, Chick, and that's not the worst of it," Nick said quite gravely.

"Why so? What do you mean?"

"I heard my name called just as I removed the receiver from its hook," Nick explained. "The voice sounded like that of a woman, though I am not positive about it. Then came a single sharp crack, like the report of a revolver, or as if the telephone had dropped from the speaker's hand and crashed upon the floor. I suspect there is something wrong."

"Can you hear anything now?"

"Not a sound."

"Call central," Chick suggested. "You may learn who rang you up."

"Presently. I still am hoping to hear something of more definite significance."

One minute passed. It brought no sound over the wire. The silence then was broken by a voice which Nick knew must be that of the exchange operator addressing the person who had rung him up.

"Did you get him?"

No answer.

Nick waited a moment longer, then cried abruptly:

"Hello, central!"

"Well?"

"This is Nick Carter talking. I can get no reply from the party who rang me up. What's the trouble?"

"There should be none. The circuit is not broken."

"Did you hear any unusual sound after making the connection, as if the telephone had been dropped, or as if something occurred?"

"I did not. I will try to get the party."

"Do so."

Nick waited and heard the operator cry repeatedly:

"Hello! Hello! Hello!"

No answer—still no answer.

No sound so much as suggesting what had occurred, what fateful deed had been done, or what horror might then be in progress, whence the mysterious telephone call had come.

The stillness over the wire was like that of death itself.

Had death, indeed, stilled the voice heard for a fleeting moment by the detective, the voice that had uttered his name, as if a cry of appeal had been cut short when it left the lips of the speaker?

The operator spoke again.

"Mr. Carter."

"Well?"

"There is something wrong. The circuit still is complete, but I can get no reply. The person who called you up evidently has left the telephone, but has not hung up the receiver."

"Were you asked to hold the wire?"

"No."

"Can you find out who called, what number, or where the telephone is located?"

"I will try."

"Do so, please, and notify me immediately."

"I will, sir."

Nick replaced his telephone on the library desk, then turned quickly to Chick.

"Have Danny here with the touring car as soon as possible," he directed, referring to his chauffeur. "You had better get ready to accompany me."

"You are going——"

"To the residence, office, or whatever the quarters may be, of the party who telephoned," Nick interrupted. "The circumstances are decidedly ominous. We'll find out why the milk is in the coconut."

"I'm with you," Chick declared, hastening to carry out the instructions given him.

Ten minutes brought the report Nick was awaiting. He then hurried through the hall, seizing his hat and overcoat, and rejoined Chick in the touring car, which had arrived at the curbing only a moment before.

"Great guns!" Chick exclaimed, upon hearing the terse directions Nick had given to Danny. "The Clayton residence, eh? Not that of Chester Clayton, our old friend and former client?"

"Yes, the same," said Nick, now looking ominously grim and determined. "He no longer is running the Hotel Westgate, however, as when we twice served him so successfully. He now is in the banking and brokerage business with his wealthy father-in-law. The firm was established soon after his marriage with Clara Langham."

"I know about that," Chick replied. "But can Clayton again be up against trouble? What more have you learned?"

"Only that the phone call came from his residence," Nick rejoined. "It is one of the most costly in Riverside Drive. Something is wrong there. The exchange operator stated again that the receiver still is off the telephone hook."

"By Jove, that does appear decidedly ominous, Nick, in view of what you heard—a sound like the crack of a revolver."

"That is why I apprehend trouble. We soon shall know definitely. Ten minutes will take us to the house."

It was a palatial residence, indeed, at which they arrived within the time mentioned, and at precisely half past nine o'clock.

The night was agreeably warm for October, with a starry sky and a half-filled moon running low in the west, lending a silvery luster to the placid Hudson.

"Wait here with the car, Danny," Nick directed, alighting at the driveway entrance to the somewhat spacious grounds, which occupied a corner and also abutted on a less pretentious rear street.

"Come on, Chick, and we'll very soon solve the mystery."

"Do you know of whom the family consists, Nick, besides Chester Clayton and his wife?" inquired Chick, as they walked up the driveway.

"His mother, Mrs. Julia Clayton, and his wife's father, Mr. Gustavus Langham," said the detective. "They also have one child about four months old. There may be others for all I know, for I have seen but little of the Claytons, mother or son, since his marriage and that extraordinary case at Langham Manor more than a year ago."

"When Clayton's double, Dave Margate, was wiped out of existence," Chick observed. "He was an accomplished and vicious rat, Nick, if ever there was one."

Nick Carter did not reply. He recalled for a moment the twin relationship of the two men mentioned. He was thinking, too, of the terrible secret known only to him and the mother of these two sons, whose extraordinary resemblance to one another had made possible the two strange cases in which they had figured; one a man of wealth, character, and social distinction, the other a notorious criminal, and both ignorant of their kinship and the circumstances under which they had been separated in infancy.

Nick's mind had turned for a moment upon this distressing bit of family history confided to him by Mrs. Julia Clayton.

It still was the skeleton in her closet. Despite the death of that vicious son, who had followed the footsteps of his criminal father, or his supposed death under circumstances warranting hardly the shadow of a doubt, there had been no further disclosure of her terrible secret.

"Let it die with him, Mr. Carter, if David Margate is really dead," she had said confidentially to Nick, after the sensational case at Langham Manor. "God grant that it is so. Not that I am an unnatural mother, however, who can deliberately wish for the death of her own son, but because his career has been one of persistent vice and crime, and his kinship with the loyal son who bears my maiden name has been the one black shadow that I have seen threatening the happiness and welfare of Chester Clayton. He does not know; must never know. It will be better far for all concerned. Let the dead bury the dead."

Nick agreed with her to this extent, and he was again thinking of her when, after more than a year, he strode up the driveway toward the Clayton residence—instinctively feeling himself on the threshold of another mystery.

"There is a light in the front hall," he remarked to Chick, when they came nearer the house. "There must be some one at home."

"Surely."

"Come this way. I think the library also is lighted. Instead of ringing, Chick, we'll try to obtain a look from outside."

Nick had observed a brighter beam of light from one of the side windows. He saw it through the gloom under the porte-cochère. It streamed out over the side driveway beyond, giving a faint glow to the hazy mist that hung just above the cold earth, and lending a waxy luster to the dew-damp greensward of the near lawn.

Nick led the way in that direction, passing under the porte-cochère and by the closed door of a dimly lighted side hall. He then could see more plainly the window from which the light was shed.

It was a broad French window, obviously that of the house library, and opening upon a spacious side veranda. The interior blinds were partly raised, and one section of the window was open several inches.

"For ventilation, perhaps," Chick whispered, with a significant glance at his companion.

Nick did not reply. He crept noiselessly up the veranda steps, and stole toward the partly open window. Through it, at first, he caught sight of only one corner of the large, beautifully furnished room.

A telephone stand was overturned and lying on the

floor. The instrument was lying near by, with the receiver fallen from its hook.

Nick stepped nearer, and obtained a view of the entire room.

The corpse of an elderly man was lying on the floor between the telephone stand and the library table. His face was upturned in the light from the electric chandelier. His linen and garments were saturated with blood.

He had been shot through the heart.

Seated in an armchair near the opposite wall was a solitary woman. Her fine figure was clad in a handsome evening gown of black lace, the somber hue of which accentuated her ghastly paleness and the dreadful expression then on her white face—a face attractive even then with its refined, matronly features, its lofty brow, and abundance of wavy, gray hair.

She sat gazing vacantly at the corpse, obviously that of a murdered man, but not a sound came from her ashy-gray lips. One would have thought her dead, also, but for the feverish gleam and glitter of her eyes and the piteous wringing of her shapely, jewel-bedecked hands.

It was as if, in a dazed and abnormal mental condition, she strove to cleanse them of the terrible stain, of the blood-red smears that covered them from her finger tips to her wrists.

"Good heavens!" Chick gasped, at Nick's elbow. "Here's murder, Nick, hands down. That woman——"

"Is Mrs. Julia Clayton," said Nick, more calmly. "Be quiet."

He stepped into the room and approached her, followed by Chick, but though she gazed at them with her glittering eyes turned quickly upon them, she did not stir from her chair, nor appear disturbed by their unceremonious entrance.

Nick paused in front of her, saying impressively:

"You recognize me, Mrs. Clayton, of course. Speak to me. What's the meaning of this?"

She appeared to struggle inwardly, as if to make an effort to reply and to answer his question, but only two words, twice repeated in husky, horrified whispers, came from her drawn, gray lips:

"The scar! The scar—the scar!"

CHAPTER II.

NICK TAKES A CONFIDANT.

Nick Carter now saw plainly that Mrs. Julia Clayton had suffered no bodily injury. That she was mentally affected, however, either crazed with horror, or in an abnormal condition resulting from other causes, and that any immediate attempt to evoke from her an intelligible explanation of the circumstances would prove utterly futile—these points were equally obvious to the detective.

Nick tried again, nevertheless, gently grasping her shoulder and saying even more impressively:

"The scar! What do you mean, Mrs. Clayton? Try to collect yourself. You surely recognize me—Nick Carter, the detective. Try to tell me what has occurred here. What do you mean? What scar?"

The face of the woman underwent no change. She stared vacantly at Nick, with no sign of recognition, though she again tried to make a vain effort to answer his questions. But only the same two words, repeated as before, was the result:

"The scar! The scar—the scar!"

Both detectives had seen at a glance that the man on the floor was dead, that nothing could be done for him, and the attention of both naturally had turned upon the woman, whose mental distraction and bloodstained hands indicated that she had in some way figured in the shocking crime, if such it really was.

Chick drew back a little and gazed at Nick, whose grave face now reflected not only his perplexity as to the cause for such a fatality, but also his profound regard for this woman who months before had made him the confidant of her dreadful secret. He was asking himself whether in that could be found the motive for this murder—and he glanced instinctively at the upturned face of the lifeless man on the floor.

But it was a fleshy, smooth-shaved face, that of a man well into the sixties—a face that bore not even a remote resemblance to that of David Margate, this woman's crime-cursed son.

Besides, was it not known beyond any reasonable doubt that David Margate was dead?

Who could have doubted that either the bullet from Chick Carter's revolver had proved effective, when a gush of blood covered the face of the reeling crook, or that death had ensued in that swift-flowing stream in the Berkshire Hills, into which Margate had fallen and disappeared, nor so much as arisen for a moment to the surface?

These recollections, Nick's hurried inspection of the tragic scene, together with his vain inquiries addressed to Mrs. Julia Clayton—all had occupied only a very few moments, which Chick turned and asked perplexedly:

"What do you make of it? What's the trouble with her?"

"Temporarily insane," Nick murmured. "She cannot explain. She does not even recognize me."

"You don't think she is feigning?" Chick whispered.

"No, no, not for a moment. She looked precisely the same, appeared to be in precisely the same condition, when we saw her before we entered. She has undergone no change since seeing us. She is mentally deranged. She is stricken with aphasia, amnesia, or some similar condition."

"See her hands. She may have killed this man, or ——"

"One moment," Nick interrupted. "She will remain here. We'll have a hurried look at the evidence."

"But what can she mean by those two words, Nick, the scar, which appears to be all she can utter? They must have some vital significance. They may supply the key to the mystery."

"There is more of a mystery here than she can explain, Chick, while in her present condition, or than we can solve without a thorough investigation," Nick said. "We had better begin it at once, than waste time vainly interrogating her."

Nick turned while speaking and replaced the telephone stand, also the instrument in their customary position, but he did not delay to communicate with the exchange operator.

"There must be something here that will give us a hint at the truth," he added. "We'll try to find it before others show up."

"Barring these two, Nick, there seems to be no one in the house," replied Chick, after listening briefly at the open door of the adjoining hall. "That also appears extraordinary. Where are the Claytons? Where is Mr. Langham? What has become of the servants? Why are all of them absent? If for legitimate reasons, and others have not been here since their departure, it must be that the woman killed this man in a fit of madness, of which her present condition may be the result, or ——"

Chick stopped short.

A key had been thrust into the lock of the front door. The sound had reached the ears of both detectives.

Nick moved quickly, with his forefinger laid on his lips.

"Be quiet," he cautioned. "Wait!"

He stepped back of the open door, to a position enabling him to peer through the broad, brightly lighted hall.

Chick drew back against the wall.

Mrs. Julia Clayton had not stirred from her chair, had not spoken, nor ceased the piteous wringing of her blood-stained hands. She again was gazing with wide, vacant eyes at the gory form on the floor, still with no sign that she recognized the detectives, or had the slightest interest in, or understanding of, why they were there and what they were doing.

Less than three minutes had passed since they entered the house—and another now was entering.

Was that in any way significant?

Nick Carter was much too keen to overlook that possibility, though only a bare possibility it appeared to be. He saw the front door deliberately opened and the man who complacently entered.

He was of medium height and rather slender build, a man about forty years old, with thin features, a pallid complexion, and a mustache and beard of peculiar bronze hue and oily luster. His hair was of the same remarkable color, observable when he removed his hat. It was most carefully combed and brushed, being fairly plastered down with artistic skill over his skull and brow and above his ears, lending to that part of his head which it covered the glistening smoothness of a polished bronze globe.

He had entered with a latchkey. He paused in the hall and placed his cane in a stand, then removed his hat, overcoat, and gloves, all the while quietly humming a popular song.

Gloves off, he gazed into the hatrack mirror, and, with his palms, augmented the radiant smoothness of his remarkable hair, much as if that was the one personal adornment of which he was really proud.

He hesitated at the base of the stairs, toward which he had deliberately turned, and then gazed toward the library and listened, finally wheeling abruptly and walking in that direction.

Nick drew from behind the door, and in another moment the stranger appeared on the threshold—only to recoil with a startled cry, hands in the air, and with his face gone white with alarm.

"Don't be frightened," said Nick, sharply regarding him. "A crime has been committed here, and we are detectives. Who are you? I suppose you reside here."

"Detectives—crime!" The man steadied himself, yet spoke with a gasp of augmented dismay. "You don't mean a murder? Merciful Heaven! What's wrong with Mrs. Clayton?"

His gaze had fallen upon her, but she had not so much as glanced in his direction, nor appeared to know him, or have more interest in him than in the others.

"There is more wrong here than can be told with a breath," Nick replied. "Step in and answer my question. To begin with, sir, who are you?"

"I am Mr. Chester Clayton's private secretary, Rollo Garside," said he, with a manifest effort to pull himself together.

"Do you reside here?"

"Yes, yes, certainly. Who are you? How came you here? Why——"

"Patience, Mr. Garside, and answer my questions, that I may see how best to proceed with this case," Nick interrupted. "I'm a detective, as I have stated, and my name is Nick Carter."

"Oh, oh, that's very different," Garside quickly exclaimed, countenance lighting. "I have heard Mr. Clayton speak of you. I feared at first that you were deceiving me, that you were responsible for all this, and that I might suffer the same fate."

"There is nothing for you to fear," Nick replied. "Do you know where Mr. Clayton has gone this evening, and the rest of the household?"

"Yes, yes, to be sure. He has gone with his wife to spend the evening with the Burtons, in Claremont Avenue. They may return at any moment, Mr. Carter, or you may reach them by telephone. The name is Calvin R. Burton."

"Get Clayton on the phone, Chick," Nick quickly directed. "State only that I am here and wish to see him on important business. Ask him to return immediately."

Chick hastened to obey.

"Now, Mr. Garside, where are Mr. Langham and the servants?"

"Mr. Langham is in Washington on business. The servants were given this evening to attend the wedding of the butler, who resigned his position to-day to be married in Manhattanville. It is too early for them to have returned. I have been visiting a friend since seven o'clock, Professor Abner Busby, who lives in the rear street."

"Mrs. Julia Clayton, then, was left alone here?"

"Yes, sir, except the baby," nodded Garside, glancing again at the woman mentioned. "Some one had to remain here, of course, and Mrs. Clayton said she would do so, that the nurse might attend the wedding with the other servants. What is the matter with her, Mr. Carter?" he anxiously added. "She does not appear to know me. She looks dazed and unnatural. Her hands are smeared with blood. Has she gone crazy? Was it she who killed Doctor Thorpe?"

He turned with a shudder while speaking and gazed again at the lifeless man on the floor.

Chick arose from the telephone at the same moment.

"I got him, Nick, all right," he remarked. "He will start for home immediately."

"Did he ask any questions?"

"None of any importance. He said he would be here in about ten minutes."

"Very good."

Nick turned again to Clayton's private secretary. Although he had readily answered the detective's questions,

he still appeared quite overcome by the tragic circumstances. That he had told the truth concerning them, however, in so far as he was able to do so, appeared quite obvious, and Nick continued his inquiries.

"You know this man, then," said he, approaching the lifeless form.

"Yes, indeed, Mr. Carter, though I hardly recognized him at first," was the reply. "He is Mr. Clayton's family physician, Doctor Joseph Thorpe. His home is about two blocks from here."

"Were you well acquainted with him?"

"No. Only since I have been in Mr. Clayton's employ."

"How long is that?"

"About three months. I first met Doctor Thorpe when he came to attend Mr. Clayton. That was two months ago."

"What is the matter with Mr. Clayton?" Nick questioned, a bit bluntly. "I did not know he was ill."

"I cannot say of what his trouble consists," Garside replied. "He has been losing flesh and feeling quite badly for several weeks."

"Has he been going to his office?"

"Only part of the time, one or two days each week, and he then remained only during the morning. I think, Mr. Carter, that Doctor Thorpe has found his case a rather mystifying one," Garside gravely added.

Nick glanced at the physician, then at the strangely afflicted woman who, so far as was known, had been his one companion at the time of the murder.

"Go to the front hall, Chick, and intercept the Claytons when they enter," Nick abruptly directed. "Detain them in the parlor and break this matter to them as considerately as possible. Don't let them interrupt me before I have finished my investigations and ended my talk with Mr. Garside."

"Go ahead. I'll look after them, Nick," Chick replied, with a nod, while he withdrew to the hall.

"Now, Mr. Garside, I want you to be perfectly frank with me," Nick said impressively. "You have been living here several weeks. You have had a chance to observe these people. Have you ever seen indications of special friendliness between this couple?"

"Doctor Thorpe and Mrs. Julia Clayton?"

"Yes."

"Why, I cannot say that I have," faltered Garside, with manifest reluctance. "They appeared to be friends, of course, but—well, nothing more than that."

"Rack your brain," Nick insisted. "Has Doctor Thorpe been in the habit of calling here in the evening?"

"No, he has not. I don't remember that he has ever done so before."

"It is quite significant that he called this evening, then, when Mrs. Clayton was alone here and when even the servants were absent from the house. Don't you think so?"

"Well, yes," Garside slowly admitted.

"Rack your brain," Nick repeated. "Can't you recall any little circumstances, however trivial, denoting that they were particularly friendly, or even secretly so?"

Garside's brows knit perceptibly and a subtle gleam appeared in his dark eyes, now fixed with searching scrutiny on the face of the detective.

"Why, since you press me so insistently, Mr. Carter, I confess that I have seen them talking together in the hall at times," he replied.

"When others were not present?"

"Yes."

"Anything more?"

"I have noticed covert glances, also significant smiles, but I really attached no importance to them."

"What do you now think, Mr. Garside, in view of what has occurred?" questioned Nick. "Be perfectly frank with me."

"Why, I see at what you are driving, of course, and you may be right."

"It looks very much to me as if something occurred which led this woman to kill the physician," Nick quietly explained. "I found the telephone stand overturned, as if she had attempted to call for aid. She may have shot the physician when he tried to prevent her from using the instrument. This seems to be confirmed by the position of the body between the table and the telephone stand."

"I agree with you," Garside nodded. "It certainly does."

"Obviously, too, here is the weapon with which the crime was committed," Nick continued, picking up a revolver from the floor near the telephone stand. "Notice where it is lying, as if she dropped it immediately after the shooting."

"By Jove, I begin to think you are right," Garside agreed, with a display of increasing interest. "The revolver would have been found nearer the body, Mr. Carter, if the physician had it and this were a case of suicide."

"Exactly," Nick nodded. "That's the very point."

"Besides, a suicide theory seems utterly improbable."

"So it does."

"Mrs. Clayton would not have lost her head in that case, nor have touched the body. She would have called for help, and would have stated what had occurred," Garside forcibly argued.

"Certainly," Nick coincided. "Any sane woman would have done so."

"Instead, as her bloodstained hands denote, she felt of the body to learn whether the physician was dead. Upon finding that she had killed him, the shock evidently threw her into her present deranged condition."

"Undoubtedly," said Nick. "There is no getting around it. You are stating my own views, Garside, to the letter."

"There seems to be nothing else to it," Garside now declared. "Notice, too, Mr. Carter, that the drawer of the library table is partly open. The revolver was taken from the drawer."

"Are you sure of it?"

"Positively. It belongs to Mr. Clayton. I have seen it there many times. You will find its leather case in the drawer, also a box of cartridges. See for yourself."

Nick hastened to verify these statements. He found the articles mentioned in the back part of the table drawer. They appeared to clinch in his own mind the theory already expressed by the private secretary. For Nick turned abruptly to him and said:

"There is, indeed, nothing else to it. Doctor Thorpe and this woman disagreed over something. There may have been an altercation, during which she stealthily took the weapon from the drawer. Obviously, of course, the physician would not have known it was there."

"Surely not," Garside declared.

"Mrs. Clayton, then, must have been the one who had the weapon, and it appears evident that she had some serious cause to fear the physician," Nick forcibly reasoned. "She evidently attempted to use the telephone, moreover, probably intending to call for help, and when Doctor Thorpe tried to prevent her, possibly in a fit of passion, she became so alarmed that she shot and killed him. As you say, Mr. Garside, there seems to be nothing else to it."

Mr. Rollo Garside smoothed his neatly plastered hair with his palms and looked as if he thoroughly agreed with the famous detective.

"Nevertheless, it seems incredible, Mr. Carter, utterly incredible," he said tentatively. "What earthly cause can Madame Clayton have had, as she is called, to distinguish her from Mr. Chester Clayton, for standing in fear of Doctor Thorpe, even to the extreme extent of taking his life?"

"That may appear later," said Nick.

"Possibly."

"Physicians sometimes discover secrets, you know, from which they try to derive pecuniary advantage. I refer to those unprincipled practitioners who are not above blackmail. Doctor Thorpe may have been one of that class."

"Possibly," Garside repeated.

"Be that as it may," Nick added, "we know the Claytons were not expecting him this evening, or they would have remained at home. If they——"

He cut short his remark upon hearing the front door hurriedly opened, immediately followed by the familiar voices of Clayton and his wife, addressing Chick Carter in terms of hearty greeting.

Nick quietly closed the library door, then turned quickly to Garside, saying impressively:

"They have returned. Not one word to them, Garside, about our suspicions. Leave me to handle this matter and state what seems proper."

Garside complied without a moment's hesitation.

"What you say goes, Mr. Carter," he replied. "You are better able than I to determine what will be for the best."

Nick laid his hand on the secretary's arm.

"Let me explain," he said, even more earnestly. "I must look deeper into this matter before I can decide what will be for the best. In the meantime, Garside, I am averse to arresting Madame Clayton. If she was justified in killing this man, or was mentally irresponsible, as now appears quite possible, I wish to shield the Claytons from needless publicity. Until I have ferreted out the true facts, therefore, I will not arrest this woman."

"I am glad to hear you say so," Garside quickly asserted. "I have admired her, Carter, and feel a very deep sympathy for her. There may be, as you say, a justification for the crime. It seems both needless and cruel, moreover, to arrest her while in her present condition."

"It will be necessary, nevertheless, to temporarily hide our true suspicions and attribute this crime to some unknown assassin," Nick pointed out impressively. "Otherwise, Garside, her arrest would become imperative. I will take all the responsibility for deferring it, pending further investigations, but you must agree to coöperate with me."

"Coöperate with you?" questioned Garside. "What do you mean? I don't quite get you."

"I mean that, having confided in you and informed you of my suspicions, you must agree not to disclose them," Nick explained. "Otherwise, if I defer doing so, you would put me in wrong."

"Ah, I see," Garside exclaimed, eyes lighting. "In other words, Carter, you want me to keep my trap closed, or else agree with whatever views you see fit to explain."

"Exactly," Nick nodded.

"Enough said. You may depend on my doing so," Garside hastened to assure him.

"Very good. Leave me to hand out statements consistent with the superficial circumstances, then, and to dig out the true facts from under the surface. That may take time, several days, possibly several weeks. In the meantime——"

"Mum's the word, Carter, in so far as I am concerned," Garside earnestly interrupted. "I understand you perfectly. I will be as dumb as an oyster. Take it from me, Carter, you can rely upon my secrecy and discretion."

"Good enough," Nick declared, extending his hand. "Shake. Sooner or later, Garside, I will repay you in some way for all this."

CHAPTER III.

THE NEW BUTLER.

Nick Carter did not often confide in a stranger to the extent that he had confided in Mr. Chester Clayton's private secretary.

One familiar with the habits and methods of the famous detective might reasonably infer that he had some covert motive in doing so, some ulterior object to be attained by secrecy and coöperation with Mr. Rollo Garside, though what it was would by no means appear obvious. Nor, if such was the case, did it immediately appear on the surface.

For, after three days, the mystery involving the killing of Doctor Joseph Thorpe seemed to be deeper and darker than ever, with the utmost efforts of the detectives failing to shed a ray of light on the case.

Nick Carter had, in fact, found no additional evidence beyond that discovered within an hour after the crime. A careful search later that evening and early the following morning proved utterly futile. None of the windows or doors appeared to have been tampered with, nor was there any evidence that the house had been stealthily entered.

Acting upon Nick's advice, nevertheless, pending further investigations, the coroner found that Doctor Thorpe had been killed by an unknown assailant, under circumstances of which only Mrs. Julia Clayton was informed, and which she then was mentally unable to disclose.

Nick thus set the legal machine in operation, and the fact that he was at work on the case satisfied the authorities, the police, and the public that no stone would be left unturned to solve the mystery.

Three days, however, brought no observable results.

Madame Clayton remained in much the same condition as when the detectives had found her. Memory appeared to have deserted her. Her mind seemed to be a blank, and she was bereft of speech, not once having spoken since Nick first questioned her, despite the persuasive

endeavors of her grief-stricken family and professional efforts of the physicians who had been summoned.

In the care of a trained nurse, one Martha Dryden, who had had charge of the Clayton infant since its birth, she remained day after day in the same strange condition.

Doctor Thorpe was buried on the third day following the murder, the true motive for which none could conjecture, not even Nick Carter himself.

On the previous day a new butler, one John Peterson, was employed in the Clayton residence to fill the position of the one who had been married. It was this new butler who answered the bell and admitted Nick Carter about seven o'clock in the evening of the third day after the crime. It was not the first time that he had seen and admitted the detective in charge of the case.

"Good evening, Peterson," said Nick, pausing in the hall to remove his gloves and overcoat. "Mr. Clayton is at home, I infer."

"Yes, sir; he is, sir," bowed Peterson. "He is alone in the library, sir."

"I would prefer to see him alone, Peterson," said Nick, a bit dryly.

"Very well, sir."

"Is there any change in Madame Clayton's condition?"

"I think not, sir. She is just the same, sir. This way, sir."

He was a sedate, punctilious fellow, this Peterson, with a very florid face and mutton-chop whiskers, a man apparently of middle age and with an exalted appreciation of the functions of his position. One would have said with a glance, in fact, that Peterson had spent the best years of his life in the service of people of quality.

Nick followed him to the library, where Mr. Chester Clayton was awaiting him.

"Mr. Carter, sir," said Peterson, on the threshold.

"You may close the door, Peterson," said Clayton, waving the detective to a chair.

Peterson withdrew and the door closed upon his red face and rigid figure.

"Don't rise, Clayton," said Nick, while he shook hands with him. "You look pale this evening, more pale than when I saw you on the night of the crime. I venture to say you have lost thirty pounds since I lunched with you something like four months ago."

"All of that, Nick," said Clayton, smiling a bit wearily. "I have lost all I took on during the six months following my marriage. I seem to be slipping downhill on greased rollers. What more have you learned about this terrible business?"

"Nothing worthy of mention," Nick replied. "I still am much in the dark. Peterson tells me there is no improvement in your mother's condition."

"No, none whatever," Clayton said sadly. "She lies hour after hour like a woman in a trance. We have tried in vain to arouse her, or to evoke some sign of recognition. She——"

"We will talk of her a little later," Nick interposed. "Tell me, instead, Clayton, how long you have been on the down grade. When did you first detect this change in your health?"

"About three months ago, Nick, as near as I can tell."

"Did you consult a physician at that time?"

"Yes. I have tried several since then, moreover, but without deriving any benefit. I have been running down and losing flesh in spite of all they can do."

"Mr. Garside, your private secretary, tells me that you have not been going to your office for some little time."

"Only occasionally. I have not felt able to do so. That is why I made Mr. Garside one of my household, or, rather, his predecessor, who resigned his position several weeks ago. I found it necessary to transact much of my business at home, and the aid of a private secretary was imperative."

"I see," Nick nodded. "Who, by the way, was Mr. Garside's predecessor?"

"His name is John Dunbar. He was formerly a clerk in our office."

"Previous to becoming your private secretary?"

"Yes."

"Has he resumed his former position?"

"No. I don't know what has become of him."

"Why did he resign from your employ?"

"He said he intended to go West," Clayton explained. "I think he may have done so, having seen him only once since he ended our relations."

"When was that?"

"A day or two later. He called here to introduce Mr. Garside, whom he recommended very highly, and whom I had consented to employ on trial."

"Just so," Nick remarked. "I infer that Mr. Garside has proved satisfactory."

"Yes. His position is not a difficult one, as far as that goes, and he has filled it capably. I rather like him, moreover, for he appears to be very much of a gentleman."

"Did he have other recommendations except that of Dunbar, your former secretary?"

"Yes. His position is not a difficult one, as far as that goes, and he has filled it capably. I rather like him, moreover, for he appears to be very much of a gentleman."

"Did he have other recommendations except that of Dunbar, your former secretary?"

"No, he did not, nor did I require any."

"As a matter of fact, then, all that you really know about Garside is what Dunbar told you," Nick observed.

Clayton eyed him more sharply. Not only the remark, but also the detective's voice, were tinged with a subtle, sinister significance that could not be overlooked.

"What do you mean, Nick?" he demanded. "What do you imply by that?"

"Oh, nothing of consequence, perhaps," Nick now said carelessly.

"But you must have some reason for making that remark."

"It merely occurred to me, Clayton, that you first noticed symptoms of illness about the time that Dunbar left and Garside came here to live," Nick explained. "That may, of course, have been only a coincidence."

"What else could it be?" Clayton quickly questioned. "Surely, Nick, you don't suspect Mr. Garside of anything wrong?"

"No, no; certainly not," Nick assured him. "He appears to be, as you say, very much of a gentleman."

"He has my confidence, at least."

"Of which he no doubt is entirely worthy," Nick allowed. "Now, Clayton, a few words concerning your mother and her abnormal condition. It has, I think, com-

pletely mystified the physicians who have been attending her."

"Both mystified and baffled them," bowed Clayton. "They seem to be all at sea."

"No wonder. For, ordinarily, such a shock as Madame Clayton evidently suffered, while it might deprive one of speech and memory at the outset, soon seeks directly opposite avenues of relief. Memory returns full force, and speech really becomes the safety valve for the overwrought and disordered mind. There must, in my opinion, be some unsuspected cause for Madame Clayton's remaining in this apathetic condition."

"But what cause?" Clayton doubtfully questioned. "Surely, if you are right, the physicians ought to discover it."

"Those who have been attending her may not have diagnosed her case from the standpoint I have in mind," Nick replied, quite enigmatically. "I know of one thing, at least, that might have such an effect upon Madame Clayton."

"You mean?"

"Scopolamine."

"Scopolamine?"

"Yes."

"I never heard of it. What is it?"

"A drug."

"A drug?" Clayton echoed again, brows knitting. "But that's out of the question, Nick? My mother never was addicted to the use of drugs of any kind."

"Add something to that," Nick suggested.

"Add something to it? What do you mean?"

"So far as you know," said Nick, with a more curious expression on his strong, clean-cut face.

Clayton stared at him perplexedly for a moment.

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed. "I cannot agree with you. I know positively, Carter, that my mother never used drugs of any kind."

"Don't be too positive," Nick replied. "The drug may have been administered without her knowledge."

"By whom?"

"That's the question. Possibly by Doctor Thorpe himself. Possibly by some one else, whose identity is not even suspected. There may be in connection with this affair, Clayton, various circumstances that we have not even dreamed of."

"That is possible, of course," Clayton nervously admitted. "But I cannot imagine any circumstances consistent with such a theory."

"Don't try to do so," Nick replied. "Before undertaking to unearth the circumstances, Clayton, it will be better to find out positively whether I am right."

"Can that be done?"

"I think so."

"How? By what means?"

"Let me inform you," Nick said, more gravely. "Scopolamine is a drug with which the majority of physicians are not very familiar. That may be why those attending her have not suspected that it figures in this case. It first came into modern scientific use within the present generation."

"How did you learn about it?" questioned Clayton.

"That is not material," smiled Nick. "I make it a point to learn all about everything that can be applied to criminal uses. That's part of my business."

"I suppose so, after all."

"It is not necessary for me to enlarge upon the qualities of scopolamine, however, and its peculiar effects upon human organisms, particularly when used in combination with morphium," Nick continued. "It is known to produce, when persisted in, a very complete state of amnesia, frequently causing absolute loss of memory during the period it is administered, together with other effects such as are observable in Madame Clayton's condition. All this leads me to suspect the use of scopolamine in her case, possibly in combination with other ingredients, the subtle qualities of which are not generally known."

"How administered?" inquired Clayton.

"By hypodermic injection."

"But who on earth, Carter, could have drugged my mother in that way? Surely no inmate of this house is guilty of such infernal deviltry."

"That's an open question," said Nick. "We will not undertake to answer it, Clayton until I am convinced that I am right. In the meantime, however, you must conduct yourself precisely as if no such suspicion existed. You must not betray it by word, look, or sign. You must not confide in your wife, even, until after I have taken the steps I have in view. In other words, Clayton, absolute secrecy is imperative."

"I see that point, of course, and will govern myself accordingly."

"Very good."

"But what are your plans? What steps have you in view?"

"I have been talking by telephone to-day with a Philadelphia physician and chemist, an intimate personal friend, whom I know to be an expert in the use of all kinds of drugs, and thoroughly informed as to the peculiar qualities and effects of scopolamine. If there is any man who can determine positively whether it figures in this case, that man is Doctor Grost. I have described Madame Clayton's condition to him and he is inclined to my opinion. He has consented to come to New York and see her, and he will be here to-morrow morning. I will call here with him, Clayton, at precisely ten o'clock."

"By Jove, I am glad to know this," Clayton earnestly declared. "It gives me a ray of hope, at least."

"You must be careful not to betray it, nevertheless," Nick again cautioned him. "Conduct yourself precisely as if we had not discussed this matter, and as if my visit with Doctor Grost was not anticipated."

"I will do so, Carter, take my word for it," Clayton again assured him. "I will be constantly on my guard."

"Very good," Nick replied, rising to go. "That is all I can say to you this evening. Expect me at ten o'clock to-morrow morning in company with the Philadelphia physician. We can bank positively on one fact, Clayton, that he will speedily determine whether or not I am right."

Clayton arose, looking vastly relieved, and accompanied the detective to the door.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RESULT OF A RUSE.

It was eight o'clock when Nick Carter left the Clayton residence. He departed without so much as a backward glance, as if he had no further interest in the house and its surroundings. He walked briskly out to his tour-

ing car, in which Danny Maloney had been waiting, and was driven rapidly away.

One would have supposed that his visit was all above-board, that he was actuated with no covert designs, that he entertained no secret suspicions, aside from those he had expressed during his interview with Mr. Chester Clayton.

Earlier that evening, nevertheless, while discussing the case with his junior partner, Patsy Garvan, it was very obvious that Nick Carter had from the first been working under the surface. Their interview occurred immediately after dinner, while Nick was making ready for his call upon Clayton.

"Nothing is more effective, Patsy, than a shot from behind a masked battery," he remarked, while knotting his cravat. "When fired at a concealed adversary, even, whose position and designs are only suspected, it is almost sure to drive him from cover."

"There is something in that, chief, for fair," Patsy agreed. "But why do you feel so sure you are right in suspecting Clayton's private secretary?"

"For several reasons," said Nick. "First, Patsy, because we can find no one else to distrust. I have spent three days in a vain search for another suspect and a reasonable motive for this murder."

"That's true, chief. It sure has been a vain hunt."

"Doctor Thorpe, I have learned, was a man of strong and sterling character. Suicide is out of the question. He is absolutely above suspicion, moreover, in so far as having given Madame Clayton any cause for shooting him. The evidence, also, shows that that theory is utterly improbable, in spite of the fact that I told Garside I suspected it, and then took the precaution to bind him to secrecy."

"But why did you suspect him so quickly, chief?"

"Because he entered so quickly after Chick and I arrived there," Nick explained. "Scarce three minutes had passed. If not a coincidence, which I could not easily swallow, it must have been premeditated. That smacked of something wrong, of a knowledge of what had occurred, if not having had a hand in it, even."

"I see the point," said Patsy.

"I at once suspected, therefore, that Garside had been watching outside, that he had seen us entering the house, and that he followed us as quickly as he dared, bent upon learning how we regarded the crime, and also lest Madame Clayton might say something of definite significance, in spite of her mental derangement."

"You decided, then, that he was responsible for that, also."

"Certainly. That was a perfectly natural deduction, Patsy, if I was justified in suspecting him at all."

"Sure thing, chief; so it was."

"I immediately shaped a course, therefore, which I thought would enable me to confirm my suspicions."

"I see."

"I soon succeeded in doing so," Nick continued. "I sent Chick from the room and pretended to make Garside my confidant. I soon found that he was very willing to fix the crime upon Madame Clayton. For he not only agreed with all I said to that effect, but he no sooner found that I was forming that opinion, or supposed that I was, than he began to point out evidence and circumstances in support of it. All this, mind you, regardless of the woman's lofty character and exemplary past."

"I get you, chief," nodded Patsy. "He evidently was afraid you might overlook something."

"He appeared to be, certainly," Nick replied. "He then informed me that the revolver found there belonged to Clayton, also that it had been taken from the table drawer. He did so before having examined it, Patsy, when he could not possibly have been positive of the fact."

"He overleaped his mount, eh?"

"That is precisely what he did," said Nick. "I then felt reasonably sure that I was justified in suspecting him."

"He left himself open, all right."

"I saw plainly, however, that he was a rat of more than ordinary craft and cunning. Otherwise he could not have committed the crime and planted the evidence we found there, and then got out of the house and returned in so confident and self-assured a way, all within the half hour since I had heard Madame Clayton's voice by telephone."

"It sure was quick work, chief," declared Patsy.

"I at once decided, therefore, to meet the scamp with his own weapons," Nick added. "I felt sure I could fool him and finally clinch my suspicions, providing I could throw him off his guard for a time. I have given him three days' grace, so to speak, in which to get rid of any misgivings he may have felt. He ought to be well rid of them by this time. Now, by Jove, I propose to get after him and drive him from cover."

"That's the stuff, chief."

"We must discover his game, how and why he committed the crime, and whether he had confederates," Nick said, more forcibly. "We must make dead sure, in fact, that I am justified in suspecting him."

"That is why you have established a new butler in the Clayton house," observed Patsy, with an expressive grin.

"Exactly."

"Does Clayton suspect his identity?"

"Not yet. I told him merely that I knew a man admirably qualified for the position. I had no difficulty in persuading Clayton to employ him on trial."

"On trial, eh?" laughed Patsy. "Gee whiz! he'll make good, chief, all right. My money goes on that."

"If he fails, Patsy, it will be the first time," Nick replied, smiling. "Slip into a disguise, now, and get ready to go with me. I shall leave in about five minutes."

"I'll be ready, chief, all right. Danny has just arrived with the touring car."

"We will drop you about a block from the Clayton place," Nick added. "You already know why I am going there and what I require of you. If you get a line on this suspect—well, that should open the way. You must be governed by circumstances."

"You leave him to me, chief," said Patsy confidently, as he hastened from the chamber in which Nick had been dressing. "I'll get all that's coming to me. Trust me for that."

In the foregoing may be found not only the occasion for Nick Carter's call upon Clayton, with a hint at the subterfuge involved, but also why he departed without a backward glance, or the slightest sign of interest in the surrounding grounds.

For Patsy Garvan had arrived there immediately after Nick entered the house, and upon him devolved the most

important part of the work laid out for that evening by the detective.

It was a fit night, moreover, for the task engaging Patsy. The sky was clouded, with not a solitary star relieving the inky gloom of the heavens. A gray fog hung like a thin veil near the earth, sufficiently dense to lend a sallow glow to the arc lights, and add to the obscurity in localities beyond the reach of their searching rays.

A gusty wind was blowing, driving the gray mist in confusing swirls over the Hudson, and sighing dismally through the dripping foliage of the trees adorning the grounds of the crime-cursed home of the Claytons.

Patsy did not approach the house from in front. Stealing into the grounds from the side street, he crept around the garage, then picked his way over the damp lawn, taking advantage of the deeper gloom under the trees, until he found shelter under a huge clump of rhododendrons a few feet from the driveway, and within easy view of the side veranda and the French window of the brightly lighted library.

Patsy arrived there just in time to see Peterson usher Nick into the room. Both were dimly discernible through the lace draperies and under the partly drawn shades.

"Gee whiz! there's the new butler," chuckled Patsy, when he caught sight of him. "I hardly expected to get my lamps on him. Stiff as a ramrod, eh? But he'll limber up, all right, if there should be anything doing."

Peterson, having withdrawn from the library, encountered Mr. Garside just at that moment descending the front stairs. He paused and bowed respectfully when the private secretary spoke to him.

"Mr. Clayton is engaged, Peterson?" he said inquiringly.

"Yes, Mr. Garside, sir."

"With whom, Peterson?"

"With Mr. Carter, sir, the detective," said Peterson, with becoming humility.

Garside eyed him more sharply.

The florid face of the butler was as inscrutable as that of the sphinx.

"I want Mr. Clayton's signature to these letters," Garside remarked, displaying two typewritten sheets. "It will do in the morning. Would you mind taking them up to my room, Peterson, and leaving them on my desk?"

"No, sir. Very willing, sir," said Peterson obsequiously.

He received them with a bow and went upstairs.

Garside sauntered toward the side hall, into which he vanished, only to peer out cautiously and watch the butler until he disappeared. Then he seized a woolen cap from a rack on the wall and stole quickly toward the rear door of the house.

Patsy Garvan caught sight of him a moment later, a stealthy figure noiselessly picking his way around a corner of the house, against the lighter background of which his dark outlines were dimly discernible.

"Gee whiz! the chief sure has called the turn," thought Patsy, instantly alert. "The rat is coming from his hole. It's that private secretary, all right, or my lamps have gone mighty misty. Yes, by Jove, I'm right. Let the chief alone to drive him from cover."

Garside was passing one of the lighted windows, when, for a moment, he could be seen more distinctly and his identity positively determined.

He paused briefly, then moved on like an evil shadow, darker than the surrounding darkness, until he came to the veranda steps. Up these he crept, crouching on his hands and knees, until he was within a yard of the broad French window, through which he cautiously peered, lingering and listening.

"Driven from cover is right," thought Patsy, intently watching him. "He's out to play the eavesdropper, just as the chief suspected. What will he do next, after Nick has filled his ears with that fake story about a Philadelphia physician? It's dollars to fried rings, now, that it will drive him to a move of some kind. It will be a chilly day, by gracious, if I fail to get next."

Nearly half an hour passed.

Garside remained crouching on the veranda.

Patsy continued to watch him from under the rhododendrons.

The interview in the library came to an end. The crouching man crept quietly from the veranda, then stole hurriedly to a front corner of the house. He saw Nick emerge, watched him stride quickly down the driveway, and enter the touring car, departing without a backward glance; and then he straightened up, lingering for a moment, and fiercely shook his fist after the receding car.

"Good enough! That shows your true colors, all right," muttered Patsy, still watching him. "Now, you rascal, go ahead and cut loose. I'm right here to note your next move."

Patsy had not long to wait.

Garside lingered only until the rear red light of the touring car had disappeared in the misty distance. He did not return to the house. Instead, now moving less cautiously, he hastened toward the rear grounds, passing the garage and seeking the narrow back street adjoining the Clayton residence.

Patsy stealthily followed him.

The back street was deserted. The scattered dwellings were in darkness. An incandescent lamp here and there, looking sallow and sickly in the gray fog was all that relieved the misty gloom.

Garside soon brought up at a narrow wooden door in a high brick wall flanking one side of an old estate. He opened the door with a key and disappeared into the inclosed grounds.

Patsy paused and briefly sized up the place. He could see beyond the wall the upper part of an old stone house, shrouded in darkness. An iron grille gate in front was all that broke the stretch of the grim brick wall, which was about seven feet high, and the cement capstone of which was surmounted with a threatening array of broken bottles and jagged pieces of glass, a vicious safeguard against unwelcome intruders.

"Gee whiz! that says keep out, all right," thought Patsy, while he made a closer inspection of the side wall. "It's up to me to get in there, all the same. This may be where the party lives whom Garside said he was visiting on the night of the murder. Professor Abner Busby was the name he gave Nick, but it don't appear in the city directory. I'll have a look at the back wall."

Patsy already had tried the wooden door and found that Garside had locked it after entering. Near the rear corner of the wall, however, he found that the branches of the tree overhung the jagged capstone, and he promptly decided that that would serve his purpose.

Quickly climbing to one of the lowest branches, Patsy worked himself out on it hand over hand, until he reached

a point beyond the wall, when he dropped noiselessly upon the greensward within the inclosed grounds.

Crouching in the darkness near the wall, he then had another view of the house, this time from the rear. It looked as grim and gloomy as a country jail, or the habitation of a recluse bent upon dwelling in absolute seclusion.

Only one curtained window was lighted, that of a room on the ground floor, a window in the rear wall. The rest of the house was shrouded in darkness while most of the surrounding grounds, running to rank grass and high weeds, appeared to be deserted.

CHAPTER V.

PATSY SEES A GHOST.

Patsy Garvan had moved nearly as quickly as his quarry. It had taken him only a few moments to scale the high brick wall and assure himself that the inclosed grounds were deserted, it then being evident that Garside had entered the grim old house.

Still proceeding cautiously, nevertheless, Patsy crept from under the wall and approached the lighted window. He then saw that it was protected with vertical iron bars, like that of a jail, as were the other windows on the ground floor.

The spring roller of the curtain was set at the bottom of the window, moreover, the shade drawing upward by means of a cord running through a pulley in the top of the casing. It was drawn up to about two inches from the top, and the upper section of the window was open about the same distance, obviously for ventilation.

Patsy tried vainly to peer between the curtain and the casing. The iron bars precluded his getting his head near enough to the sashes to obtain any view of the interior of the room. Indistinctly, however, he could hear the sound of voices from within, but could not distinguish what was said.

"Gee, there's nothing to it!" he murmured, drawing back and gazing up at the narrow opening through which the faint sounds evidently came. "I must get up there and have one look, at least. I then could hear, too, all that may be said. I'll take a chance with these bars, by thunder, let come what may."

Grasping two of them, Patsy found that they were firmly fixed in the stonework. Drawing himself up until he could place his feet on the stone sill, which was about four feet from the ground, he then stood erect and found that his eyes came directly opposite the opening at the top of the window.

Pressing nearer, still clutching the bars in order to maintain his position, with his sturdy figure outlined like a black silhouette against the lighted curtain, Patsy gazed cautiously into the room, with ears alert to catch every word that was uttered.

The room, like the exterior of the house, presented an appearance of remarkable solidarity. Huge timbers supported the dark oak ceiling, smoke-begrimed and defaced with age.

Two of the wainscoted walls were flanked with deep shelves, filled with bottles, vials, jugs, carboys, and no end of paraphernalia required in a chemist's laboratory.

A zinc-covered table occupied one side of the room. It was littered with like articles. A Bunsen burner was in operation under a retort held in a tripod, and in which a dark fluid was bubbling furiously, while drops of distillation fell slowly from the end of a metal coil into a vial placed to receive them.

All this was visible in the white light from several electric lamps, as were the faces and figures of the three occupants of the spacious room, which obviously was a chemist's laboratory.

One was a gaunt, angular man of nearly sixty, with a wrinkled, hard-featured face, thin lips, and a square jaw, a hooked nose and sunken eyes, that gleamed and glittered venomously in their cavernous sockets.

It was, plainly enough, the face of a man whose life had been a continuous round, not of enjoyments, but of disappointments, until his nature had soured and his soul rebelled, and early ambition died from his calloused heart.

Another was a woman of about the same age and of much the same aspect, as if she had been the partner of his vain hopes and consequent woes, as indeed she had. Both were cheaply and carelessly clad, bordering close upon slovenly. They were seated on common wooden chairs near the zinc-covered table.

All this paled to utter insignificance, however, in view of Patsy Garvan's overwhelming amazement when his gaze fell upon the third person in the room. He was utterly nonplused. He could, as he afterward said, have been knocked toes up with a feather.

There was no mistaking the man, no possibility of error. The error had been made more than twelve months before.

The man was Garside—and not Garside.

His neatly plastered hair was lying on the table, also his flowing mustache and carefully trimmed beard—as artistic and effective a disguise as ever adorned the face of a stage star, or blinded the searching scrutiny of a detective to the sinister features of a crook.

He was seated directly opposite the couple described. He evidently had removed his disguise because of the heat in the room. With his thin, clean-cut features and his own close-cut hair, a more pronounced change could scarce be imagined.

For this man now had become, and in reality was—a veritable personal counterfeit of the man for whom he had been acting as a private secretary for more than three months, and in whose home he had been dwelling unsuspected—a living likeness of Chester Clayton himself.

One glance convinced Patsy Garvan of his identity, though it was like seeing a ghost, the dead alive—the man who was supposed to have been killed by a bullet from Chick Carter's revolver, or to have been drowned in the swirling current of a stream in the Berkshire Hills.

This was the man who twice had conspired against Chester Clayton, who twice had been thwarted by Nick Carter and his assistants, the man whose true history and twin kinship with Clayton was known only by Nick and the mother then lying bereft of memory and speech in the banker's mansion.

"Great guns!" gasped Patsy, staggered beyond description. "Have my lamps gone wrong? Is my bean twisted? That's Chester Clayton's double, Dave Margate, alive, too, as sure as I'm a foot high. He wasn't drowned, then, as we supposed, nor did Chick's bullet kill him. But it hit him, all right, and left its mark. Gee whiz! that's what Madame Clayton meant by those two words—the

scar! the scar! Holy smoke! this sure sheds new light on the case."

It was plainly visible, in the bright light that fell upon his head—a scar running like a clean-cut white mark through his dark hair, and extending nearly over the top of his head.

It told plainly, too, where Chick's bullet had struck him, glancing from the skull without causing a fracture, but depriving him of consciousness and causing him to pitch headlong into the river, the chill of which must have quickly revived him, enabling him to escape drowning and elude discovery, though by what means Patsy could not then conjecture.

Nor was he then inclined to speculate upon it, or concerning the other features of that sensational case of months before; for that then engaging him was of paramount importance, and, despite his momentary amazement upon beholding Margate alive, by which name he now will be designated, Patsy had been alert to catch every word of the intercourse then in progress.

"Where is Dunbar? Where is Haley? Why aren't they here, Busby, in case of need?"

These were the first words to reach Patsy's ears, uttered with feverish impatience by David Margate, and confirming the former's suspicion as to the identity of the occupant of the house.

"Dunbar—Clayton's former secretary," thought Patsy. "There is a bigger gang and been more doing, by Jove, than the chief suspects."

Busby shook his head, replying with a rasping snarl:

"How can I tell you where they are? Neither has been here since morning."

"Do you know, Nancy?" Margate demanded, turning to the woman.

"No, Dave, I don't," she replied. "They went out about noon."

"But why are you here?" Busby questioned suspiciously. "What sent you at this hour? Is anything wrong?"

"Wrong enough," Margate said, with asperity. "We are up against it, Busby, good and strong."

"Up against what?"

"Suspicion."

"Suspicion!" Busby lurched forward in his chair. "Not—not Nick Carter?"

"That's what."

"But you told me yesterday——"

"What I told you yesterday cuts no ice, Busby, in view of what I have overheard to-night," Margate curtly interrupted.

"What d'ye mean?"

"I mean that I've been buncoed by the infernal sleuth. He has served me one of his devilish tricks. He pretended to swallow all that I handed him three nights ago, and I was fool enough to believe him. Luckily, however, I got wise to-night without his suspecting it. I'll pay him off with his own coin. I'll queer his present game, in spite of his scurvy ruse, and hand him goods of another color."

Busby's parchment-hued face had taken on a look of apprehension and anxiety, while that of his wife lost its last vestige of color.

"Does he suspect your identity?" questioned Busby.

"No, not for a moment."

"Or me?"

"No, nor you," Margate assured him. "You are out of it entirely."

"Thank God for that," Busby fervently exclaimed. "I should never have gone into the cursed job. It was too long a chance."

"But having gone into it, Busby, you cannot safely back out," Margate said curtly. "Besides, you ought not wish to, Busby, with a million or more at stake. As for it's being a long chance—rats! No chance is too long for me to take. I'll make good, too, in spite of Carter and all of his kennel."

"Do you think so?"

"I know so."

"Why were you so upset, then, when you entered?"

"I was mad with myself, disgusted with myself, for having been blinded by the infernal meddler," Margate declared, with a growl. "I ought to have suspected it, ought to have known he would suspect me and serve me some crafty trick. Twice burned, one surely should fear the fire. I ought to have been on my guard. Listen. I'll tell you what I overheard to-night."

Busby listened without interrupting, also the woman, and Margate quickly informed them of the interview between Nick Carter and Clayton.

"That's all," he said, in conclusion. "It's enough, too, but it don't break the camel's back. Not by a long chalk."

"Enough is right, Dave," Busby now said grimly. "He suspects you, or he would not have questioned Clayton about you."

"Nor have made that crack about Clayton's illness coming on soon after he employed me."

"Do you think he suspects your game?"

"No, not for a moment," Margate asserted confidently. "How can he suspect it, Busby, supposing me to be dead?"

"That's true. Nor that Dunbar threw up his job in order that you might slip in there?"

"Carter does not dream of that."

"He soon will, all right, and something more than dream of it," thought Patsy, elated by the important discoveries he was making.

"Nor does he suspect that Mattie Dryden is in love with me and obeying my every command," Margate forcibly added. "It has simplified matters, my having the nurse under my thumb and willing to go the limit for my sake. I doubt that I could have found opportunities to secretly drug the old woman and keep her tongue-tied until we can pull off our deeper game. It's dead easy for Mattie to do, however, without incurring suspicion."

"But how did Carter get wise to our use of scopolamine?"

"That's only a guess on his part," Margate declared. "He's an infernally good guesser, then, and it puts us in bad," growled Busby.

"Bad enough, I'll admit; but there's a way out."

"Not if he brings that Philadelphia physician to the house, Dave, and——"

"Rot!" snapped Margate, interrupting. "Do you suppose for a moment, Busby, that I'm to be thwarted at this stage of the game?"

"But how can you prevent it?"

"I'll prevent it, all right. Carter does not suspect my identity. Nor does Clayton, nor his wife, nor her father. I have fooled them all for three full months. Am I now to be balked, when all was ripe to have turned the final

trick, if the prying eyes of that old jade had not lit upon the truth? No, no, Busby, not on your life. I'll play the game to a finish. I'll get away with a million of Clayton's fortune. Nick Carter, nor the devil himself, shall not prevent me."

"But he will ring in that physician, Dave, as sure as fate," Busby apprehensively insisted.

"Little good that will do him."

"There's another contingency, also. Even if the physician fails to detect traces of scopolamine, Carter then may begin to watch the woman, or the nurse, or——"

"No, he'll not, Busby."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because, blast him, he'll have no woman to watch," Margate cried, with more vicious vehemence.

"No woman to watch!" Busby stared at him. "What do you mean by that?"

"I mean what I say," Margate came back at him. "I'll tell you how it can be done. That's why I am here tonight. I'll beat Carter at his own game. Never again shall he foil my designs. The stake is too big for me to cry quits at this stage of the game. I'll fool him, Busby. I'll knock his present game on the head. I'll tell you how it can be done."

"Go ahead, you rascal, and tell me, also," thought Patsy, ears alert. "I then will land you rats where you belong. Go ahead and——"

But Patsy's train of thought ended as abruptly as it had begun.

It was cut short by a voice from behind him, that of a man who, with a companion, had quietly entered from the street a few moments before, so quietly that Patsy had not heard them. They had caught sight of his sturdy figure in black relief against the glow on the curtained window.

"Come down here, stranger, and come down with your hands up!" he cried sharply. "If you reach for a gun, or show fight, we'll croak you on the instant. Come down here, I say, and be quick about it."

CHAPTER VI.

THE GANG AND THE GAME.

Patsy Garvan heard, with a thrill of dismay, the threatening commands that suddenly broke the silence behind him. He heard, too, a vicious oath that came with a wolfish growl from David Margate, when he leaped from his chair and rushed toward the rear door of the house, immediately followed by Busby and the woman.

"Gee whiz! I'm caught hands down," was the thought that leaped up in Patsy's mind, as he turned and gazed over his shoulder.

One glance was enough to confirm his misgivings. Two men were standing about four feet behind him, both stocky, dark-featured fellows, and both held a revolver ready for instant use. That they were the two men he had heard mentioned, Dunbar and Haley, Patsy also rightly inferred.

"Come down here," Dunbar repeated, brandishing his weapon. "Be quick about it, too, or I'll plug you with a bullet."

Patsy saw that he had no sane alternative, that his own promising designs were nipped in the bud, and that the discovery of his identity by Margate was almost inevitable.

He met the situation with characteristic coolness, nevertheless, though thoroughly disgusted with the ominous turn of affairs. He sprang down from the window, replying curtly:

"Save your bullets. You may need them later."

"Now or later matters little to us," snapped Dunbar, thrusting his revolver under Patsy's nose. "Shove up your hands and give an account of yourself. What do you want here?"

"You wouldn't fancy hearing just what I want," Patsy said dryly.

He had no opportunity to say more, for Margate and Busby rushed out of the house at that moment, and Patsy found himself confronted by the four men, and his escape a decidedly remote possibility.

"What's this, Dunbar?" Margate demanded sharply. "Who is the fellow. What was he doing here?"

"It's easy to say what he was doing, Dave," replied Dunbar, pointing to the window. "It's not so easy to say who he is."

"He's an infernal spy, Dave, that's what he is," put in Haley.

"We'll very soon find out," said Margate, glaring at Patsy in the faint glow cast from the curtained window. "Bring him into the house. Keep him covered, mind you, and shoot him if he lowers a finger."

"Let me alone for that," growled Dunbar. "Get a move on, young fellow, or you'll hear something drop."

Patsy made no comments, nor offered any resistance. He followed Margate and Busby into the house, their two confederates bringing up in the rear. He heard one of them close and bolt the heavy door, while he passed through a dimly lighted passageway, and he presently found himself confronted by all four in the glare of the chemist's laboratory.

Margate, in his apprehension and excitement, had not delayed to resume his disguise. Viewing Patsy in the bright light, moreover, he instantly penetrated that worn by the detective, partly because of the suspicion he already entertained.

"Just as I thought," he cried quickly. "He is one of Carter's push, that bright rat known as Patsy Garvan. Get his guns, Haley, and secure his hands behind him. Be sure you make them fast. Push up that window, Busby, and pull the curtain to the top. We'll mighty soon find out what sent him here and where we stand."

He tore off Patsy's disguise while speaking, and his confederates hastened to obey his commands. In less time than would be required to describe their doings in detail, Patsy was deprived of his two revolvers, his arms secured behind him, the window closed, and the curtain completely drawn, precluding further observation from outside.

Margate, in the meantime, appeared to regain his composure. That he regarded Patsy's presence there as exceedingly ominous, moreover, was manifest in the expression that had settled on his white, hard-set face. It reflected all that was devilish in his nature, giving the lie to his outward calmness, and evincing the vicious determination and designs back of his self-restraint. Such men are most to be feared.

"Now, Haley, slip out and have a look around the house," he directed. "Make sure that no one else is nosing around here. I reckon you'll find no one. I think I now see through Carter's game of this evening and why

this rat is here. If I am right, we shall never leave here alive to tell the story. Slip out and have a look, Haley, nevertheless. We'll take no needless chances."

Haley pulled his woolen cap over his brow and hastened from the house.

Margate pointed to the chair directly opposite that which he had taken.

"Sit down, Garvan, and feel yourself at home!" he commanded, with ominous politeness. "You may as well, since you are booked to remain here."

Patsy obeyed, sitting down and speaking for the first time since entering the house.

"Is that so?" he inquired indifferently.

"Decidedly so."

"Well, this is not so bad," Patsy dryly observed, gazing around.

"It will be bad enough, Garvan, you'll find," Margate more sternly informed him. "Your work of to-night will prove disastrous for you. The discovery of my identity is the worst discovery you could have made. It leaves me no alternative."

"By wiping me off the map, I suppose."

"You mean?"

"I must effectually silence you."

"Ah, I see."

"And that can be done in only one way."

"By wiping me off the map, I suppose?"

"Exactly. Dead men tell no tales."

"So I have heard," said Patsy, as complacently as if discussing the price of ice. "Nevertheless, Mr. Margate, I am glad that I have unmasked you. I will confess, too, that I was never more surprised in my life. So I am to be turned toes up, am I?"

"As sure as you are looking at me at this moment," Margate coldly informed him.

"Well, that's reasonably sure," said Patsy. "I almost feel myself going. Before the final trick is turned, however, I really wish you would answer one question."

"What question, Garvan?"

"How the dickens did you contrive to give us the slip a year ago?"

Margate smiled derisively.

Patsy knew that he was exceedingly proud of his evil exploits, and he felt sure that he would answer the question. His chief motive for asking it, however, was to gain time in which to consider his own situation, and to devise, if possible, a way of escape from the fate that threatened him.

"That puzzles you, does it?" said Margate, still with a sinister smile.

"Very much," Patsy frankly admitted. "How did you accomplish it?"

"Oh, you Carters are not the whole shooting match," Margate coldly answered. "If Chick Carter's bullet had struck me half an inch lower, nevertheless, it would have ended me," he added, pointing to the scar on his head.

"I guessed that much," nodded Patsy.

"But 'a miss is as good as a mile,'" said Margate. "It knocked me out, and I pitched overboard. Luckily, however, the chill of the water instantly revived me."

"But you did not rise to the surface," said Patsy. "Chick was dead sure of that."

"Not for some little time. It was not necessary."

"You can live under water, eh?"

"I did at that time, Garvan, long enough to reach a point where none of you ferrets were looking for me."

"But how did you turn the trick?" Patsy persisted.

"With a piece of rubber pipe about two feet long," Margate coolly informed him. "I had picked it up on the launch, apprehending trouble, and slipped it into my pocket. When I found myself rising to the surface, knowing I was in bad and a gone goose if I was seen, I slipped one end of the tube into my mouth and thrust the other end above the surface, in order to breathe through the pipe. I then paddled downstream with the current, and without showing on the surface. That's all there was to it, Garvan. A very simple trick, you see."

Patsy expressed his appreciation with a nod.

"Much obliged," he said tersely. "It was more than a simple trick, Mr. Margate. It was a very clever one. You lived up to your reputation, Margate, for fair."

Margate's eyes took on a more sinister gleam.

"I fooled you completely, didn't I?" he exclaimed.

"You certainly did," Patsy admitted.

"Nick Carter still thinks I am dead, doesn't he?"

Patsy hesitated, not inclined to further expose his own hand, and Margate quickly added, with a sharper ring in his sinister voice:

"Oh, you need not reply. I already know it. If Carter had the slightest suspicion that I am alive, you would have been informed of it, and would have felt no surprise when you saw me. That's as plain as twice two."

"Well, I guess you are right," Patsy admitted, unable to deny it.

"I know I am right."

"Let it go at that, then."

Patsy spoke with an indifference that Margate was quick to resent. He drew up in his chair. A look of intense hatred and bitter contempt appeared on his drawn, white face.

"No, I'll not let it go at that," he retorted. "I'll hand you the whole business, if only to show you how little we fear Nick Carter and his entire push. It will never go farther through your lips. I'll make dead sure of that."

His frowning observers, mute observers of the scene, appeared surprised at these daring declarations, but none ventured to interfere.

Patsy was less surprised, for he was quick to detect the bitter feelings that impelled the rascal. Nor did he object, of course, for he was more than willing for him to continue.

Margate did so without hardly a moment's hesitation.

"I have a good cause to hate him, Garvan, as you very well know, but I do not fear him," he went on, with icy asperity. "Nick Carter never saw the day that he could throw me down and keep me down. I now see through his scheme of to-night. He suspects me of the Thorpe murder. He feared that I would play the eavesdropper this evening, knowing that he was closeted with Clayton, and he left you to watch me, Garvan, while he cleared out as if void of suspicion."

"That calls the turn, Margate, all right," said Patsy, seeing nothing to be lost by admitting it, and aiming to lead him on.

"It was one of Carter's crafty tricks, a ruse I ought to have suspected. But it's booked to fall flat. For having got you, Garvan, he shall never know what you have learned, nor what becomes of you."

"I can see my finish, all right," Patsy dryly allowed.

"You are not the only one booked for a finish," Margate quickly asserted. "It's Nick Carter's fault, not mine, that your death and theirs have become necessary. I could have played my game without that, if he had kept out of it."

"You're out to get part of Clayton's fortune, are you?"

"Most of it, Garvan, would hit nearer the mark."

"How can that be done?"

"It can be done, all right, in spite of Nick Carter and the slip-up of three nights ago," Margate curtly predicted. "My likeness to Clayton makes it possible. It can be done like breaking sticks."

"You look precisely like him, all right," nodded Patsy.

"No need of telling me that. I twice have taken advantage of our resemblance, and I framed up this job more than three months ago. The only difficulty lay in the fact that he had become much more fleshy than I, and that had to be overcome."

"How overcome?"

"By reducing him to my weight, of course."

"Evidently, Margate, that now has been done."

"You bet it has, Garvan, and I'm the one who accomplished it," Margate declared, still impelled with vicious pride. "I framed up the whole job. I took Dunbar into it and had him resign his position, only that I might become Clayton's private secretary and make myself familiar with his home habits and every detail of his business."

"What was the need of that?" inquired Patsy, though the audacious project now was becoming quite plain to him.

Margate laughed derisively.

"You now would see my scheme, Garvan, if you were not so thick-headed," he replied. "I'm going to abduct Clayton for about a week, with the help of these good friends of mine. I shall take his place during that time, discarding my disguise and assuming not only most of his domestic duties, but also obtain complete control of his business affairs. A week will suffice, Garvan. I can in that time get away wth all of the cash, bonds, and securities he possesses, which I already know aggregate more than a million. I can get all of them, Garvan, and turn them into cash within a week. Let me alone for that."

"Oh, I see!" exclaimed Patsy. "Though Clayton is to be abducted, his private secretary is the one who will appear to have suddenly vanished."

"Exactly," nodded Margate. "I shall become Chester Clayton long enough to get in my work. Then I will completely vanish. You can safely gamble on that."

"It's a clever scheme, Mr. Margate," said Patsy, as if impressed with the feasibility of the audacious scheme. "No less accomplished a man than you, nevertheless, could pull off such a job."

"I'll make good, all right."

"Very likely."

"And in spite of Nick Carter," Margate added, with a sneer.

"I really begin to think so," Patsy allowed, as dismally as if he really meant it. "How have you contrived to reduce Clayton's flesh and bring him down to your weight?"

"By means of a compound Busby has provided. That's why he's in the game. I gave him the formula, and he delivered the goods."

"How could you administer it to Clayton without his knowledge?"

"Easily," said Margate, with an evil leer. "It is tasteless and colorless. It was only necessary to inject it into Clayton's cigars."

"Ah, I see," said Patsy. "Very clever, Margate, indeed. I remember that you are well informed about certain kinds of drugs and poisons, chiefly those that serve your own evil ends. It strikes me, Margate, that——"

"Never mind what strikes you," snarled Busby, interrupting, after a whispered conference with Dunbar and Haley, the latter having returned a few moments before.

Margate swung round in his chair.

"How long is this to continue, Dave?" Busby impatiently added. "What's to be gained by it? There's no telling what more Carter may have up his sleeve. He already suspects enough to throw us down, if all you have said is true and he shows up to-morrow with that Philadelphia specialist. What's to be done to head him off? I'm not so sure it can be done. You certainly are wasting time, Dave, wasting time."

Margate jerked out his watch and glanced at it. His countenance changed like a flash.

"You are right, Busby," he cried, starting up from his chair. "It can be done, all right, as I soon will show you. No ruse by Nick Carter shall foil us at this stage of the game. We already have thwarted him by getting Garvan into our clutches. This way, all of you, for half a minute. I can tell you in less time how it may be done."

He strode to one corner of the laboratory, where, for several minutes, he talked in earnest whispers with his three confederates.

Patsy Garvan could only wait and watch them. That they would kill him without shrinking, in order to carry out their knavish designs, he had not a doubt. That was plainly manifested in their evil faces.

So, too, was the seeming feasibility of the steps now advocated by Margate to thwart the threatening efforts of Nick Carter. That his project would serve their purpose, that they still had their infamous game well in hand, all finally seemed to agree.

For Busby suddenly turned and hastened to one of the shelves, from which he selected a small vial and gave it to Margate, remarking grimly:

"One injection of that will do the business."

"Leave us to do the rest, then," returned Margate, then hastily resuming his disguise. "Look after this rat, Busby, and keep a constant eye on him. You had better drug him, also, to relieve you of further trouble. We can turn the trick in half an hour. One o'clock sharp, Dunbar, mind you, in the gloom under the porte-cochère."

"We'll be there, Dave," said Dunbar, with an assuring nod.

"And back here in thirty minutes," Margate added, about to go. "Leave me to prepare the way."

"Gee whiz, but he seems to feel dead sure of it!" thought Patsy, grimly watching him. "It's dead lucky, too, that the chief has an anchor to the windward. Though one ruse appears to have failed, he may make good with the other."

CHAPTER VII.

PETERSON GETS BUSY.

It was after ten o'clock that evening when Margate returned to the Clayton residence. He entered with a key by the way of the side door. A glance at the windows while approaching the stately mansion told him that most of the household were abed.

Margate hung his cap in the side hall and smoothed with his palms his neatly plastered hair, effectively hiding the scar caused by Chick Carter's bullet many months before. He observed that a dim light was burning in the library. Upon stepping quietly into the main hall, moreover, he discovered the new butler.

Peterson was nodding sleepily in a chair near the main stairway. He started slightly upon hearing the other, then quickly arose, rubbing his eyes and bowing respectfully.

"You need not have waited for me, Peterson," Margate said pleasantly, pausing and regarding him intently.

"It's the doors, sir," said Peterson, explaining.

"The doors?"

"It has been my custom, Mr. Garside, sir, to be sure they are locked before going to bed. I do not mind waiting up, sir."

"I met a friend and remained longer than I intended," said Margate, smiling.

"I do not mind, sir," repeated the butler.

"That's very good of you. Has Mr. Clayton retired?"

"He has, Mr. Garside, sir."

"How long did the detective remain here, Peterson?"

"About half an hour, sir, as I remember."

"Did he bring any good news?"

"I cannot say, sir."

"I thought that Mr. Clayton might, perhaps, have mentioned something to you," Margate observed, in an explanatory way.

"He did not, Mr. Garside, sir," said Peterson humbly.

"I see there is a light in the library."

"I left it for you, Mr. Garside, sir," Peterson explained. "I thought you might not wish to retire at once, sir, when you came in."

"That was very thoughtful, Peterson, I'm sure, but I shall presently do so. By the way, Peterson, I may be busy in my room to-morrow morning, in case Mr. Clayton gives me any work to be done at that time," Margate added, steadily regarding his hearer. "There is something you can do for me."

"I will be very glad to do it, Mr. Garside, sir," said Peterson, bowing obsequiously.

"Very good. If Mr. Carter calls during the morning, I wish you would quietly come to my room and inform me. There are a few questions I wish to ask him about a personal matter—a purely personal matter, Peterson, I assure you."

"Yes, Mr. Garside, sir."

Peterson's ruddy face appeared incapable of any material change.

"Will you quietly do so?"

"I will, Mr. Garside, sir."

"Thank you, Peterson. You are a very accommodating fellow. By the way, here is something for which I have no great use," Margate added, producing a bank note and slipping it into the butler's hand. "Favor me by accepting it."

Peterson smiled now, and appeared pleased.

"Thank you, Mr. Garside, sir," he said, with some feeling. "Thank you very much, sir."

"There is more, Peterson, where that came from" Margate remarked significantly.

"I hope so, sir," smiled Peterson. "I am glad to hear it, sir."

"Any service you can do for me, Peterson, will always be well repaid."

"No doubt, sir. Really, sir, I have not a doubt of it," Peterson vouchsafed.

"By the way, what about Madame Clayton this evening?" questioned Margate, still pausing at the base of the stairs.

"She is just the same, Mr. Garside, sir," said Peterson, at once serious and solemn again.

"That's too bad."

"Too bad, sir, indeed."

"The nurse is with her to-night?"

"Yes, Mr. Garside, sir."

"Favor me, Peterson, by tapping on the door and asking her to step into the hall. She gave me a prescription to be filled. I have done so and wish to hand it to her," said Margate, displaying a vial wrapped in white paper. "I wish to say a word to her about it, something the druggist mentioned."

"I will call her, sir," bowed Peterson.

"One moment."

"Yes, sir."

"Are you coming downstairs again?"

"Only to put out the lights, sir, and look after the doors."

"Do so before you go up, then," said Margate. "That will save you the trouble of returning."

"Very well, sir," bowed Peterson. "Thank you, sir."

Margate waited at the base of the stairs. There was a sinister gleam in his eyes, a cruel smile on his lips. He thought he had rightly sized up the butler. He felt reasonably sure that he could, if occasion required it, rely upon Peterson for almost any service for which he was liberally paid.

Peterson returned in about five minutes, and they went upstairs together.

The butler extinguished the hall light, leaving the lower floor of the house in darkness.

A dim light burned on the second floor.

Peterson tapped lightly on the door of a side chamber. It brought the nurse into the hall—a slender girl in the twenties, with thin features, reddish hair, and shifty gray eyes. She nodded and smiled, with a quick glance at the private secretary.

"Thank you, Peterson," Margate said quietly. "That's all, my good fellow. You may go up to bed. I will turn out the light in this hall for you."

"Very well, sir," bowed Peterson, evidently unsuspicious. "Thank you, sir. Good night, miss. Good night, sir."

"Good night, Peterson."

The butler turned away and vanished up the servants' stairway.

Margate took the hands of the nurse, slipping the vial into one of them, and for five minutes he remained in whispered conversation with her, giving her such instructions as served his purpose. Then he extinguished the hall light and went to his room.

Half an hour passed.

The silence in the crime-cursed house was unbroken.

Its gloom was relieved only by a faint thread of light under the door of the chamber in which Madame Clayton was lying.

Then, for the hundredth part of a second, a swift gleam appeared on the servants' stairway. It shot downward, danced for an instant over the stairs and wall, then vanished.

It appeared again in about a minute. It lingered for several seconds. A figure was vaguely discernible in the gloom back of the swiftly moving ray, a figure stealing noiselessly down the stairs—that of Peterson, the house butler.

He crept down as silently as a shadow, as if he was far from being a novice in such stealthy work.

He stole to the door of Madame Clayton's chamber, crouching there in the darkness, and peered through the keyhole.

He could see the form of the unconscious woman lying on the bed.

He saw, too, that of the nurse bending above her, watching her intently, with an empty hypodermic syringe in her hand.

"Just in time," thought Peterson. "Too late to prevent it, but not too late to see what has been done. That may serve as well."

He stole away as he had come, but not to return to his room. He remained crouching near the top of the servants' stairway, waiting patiently in the inky darkness, minute after minute, until a tall, old-fashioned clock in the lower hall struck one.

Then a beam of light from another quarter dispelled the gloom.

Margate stole out of his chamber and crept down the front stairs.

The nurse stepped into the hall and waited, holding a bundle of garments under her arm.

Margate returned in about three minutes in company with two men—Dunbar and Haley.

Peterson sat watching them from the top of the stairs.

He saw them enter the room, all three men, from which they presently emerged with a heavy burden—the senseless woman.

Moving noiselessly, they bore her down the stairs and out of the house.

Peterson started up to follow them, then resumed his seat on the top stair.

His way was barred and pursuit precluded by the nurse, still lingering in the dimly lighted hall.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CLOSING NET.

Nick Carter was called early to the Clayton residence the following morning. He was summoned by a frantic telephone call from Chester Clayton, informing him what had occurred the previous night, or what he supposed had occurred, and Nick lost no time in responding, in company with Danny Maloney.

It was about seven o'clock when his touring car sped up the driveway and stopped under the porte-cochère.

"Wait here, Danny," said Nick, springing out.

Peterson admitted him, looking more serious and solemn than ever.

"This way, Mr. Carter, sir," he said, while Margate also approached through the hall to greet him. "Mr. Clayton is waiting for you in the library."

Nick followed him and shook hands with Margate, then posing as boldly as ever in the assumed character of the private secretary.

"This is terrible business, Carter, terrible," he said, with subdued earnestness, while they paused for a few seconds in the hall. "We are literally overwhelmed, all of us."

"Clayton told me only that his mother is missing and that the nurse has fled," Nick replied. "Is nothing more known, Garside, of the circumstances?"

"Only what is contained in a note left by the nurse."

"What does that state?"

"Merely that she fell asleep about two o'clock and did not awaken until after three," Margate earnestly reported. "She then found that Madame Clayton was not in her room, also that some of her clothing was missing. Terribly alarmed, yet fearing to arouse the house, she at once began a search for her, hoping to find her and lead her back to her room. She found, instead, that the side door of the house was open, and she then knew that Madame Clayton must have gone out-of-doors."

"The nurse left this information in writing?" Nick put in.

"Yes, in a hurriedly penciled letter," Margate nodded. "She states that she made a hurried search in the grounds, but could not find Madame Clayton, and that she then returned to the house."

"And then?"

"She then realized, evidently, that she had been very culpable and feared the censure and punishment she had incurred," Margate went on. "For she adds that she did not dare to remain here, but was going to leave with what clothing she could carry away. That's all that her letter states, Carter, but it seems to cover the ground."

"I agree with you, Garside, as far as it goes," said Nick, as gravely as if he really meant it. "Who discovered their absence?"

"Peterson, the butler, when he came down from his room. He saw that the door of Madame Clayton's chamber was open, which is very unusual, and he looked in and found that both women were missing. He then notified me, Carter, and I aroused Mr. Clayton and his wife. Both are nearly overwhelmed by the calamity."

"No wonder. How long ago was this?"

"Less than half an hour. We notified you immediately."

"I will have just a word with them," said Nick.

"Command me in any way, Carter, if I can be of service," Margate artfully pleaded, briefly checking him.

"Presently," Nick nodded. "I will see you again in a moment."

He hastened into the library with the last, where he found both Clayton and his wife, the latter in tears and both ghastly with consternation and anxiety.

Nick said what he could to encourage them, at the same time hurriedly inspecting the letter left by Martha Dryden, and he then observed that Margate had followed him into the room. This was precisely what he had anticipated—and wanted.

"What have you done, Clayton, beyond sending for me?" he abruptly inquired.

"Nothing whatever," Clayton declared, with a groan. "I'm all upset. I know not what to do."

"One thing must be done without delay, then, for a

starter," said Nick. "We must try to trace the missing woman."

"That's what I have advised," Margate said quickly.

"Certainly. That's the first step to be taken."

"I will go with you, Carter, and——" Clayton began.

"No, no, don't think of it," Nick interrupted decidedly. "You are in no fit condition for such work. Besides, it will require only two or three to effectively cover the ground. I have my chauffeur, and Garside no doubt will be glad to aid me."

"Most assuredly," Margate cried, eyes lighting. "We should, I think, start in at once."

"We will do so," said Nick, turning. "You remain here with your wife, Clayton, till we have ended our search. That will not take long. If it proves futile, I then will decide what next must be done. Come with me, Garside. We'll pick up Danny on our way out."

They left the house by the side door, Nick quickly informing Danny of their mission, while Margate pointedly observed:

"Your chauffeur had better go one way, Carter, while we take another direction. Why not let him tackle the front street?"

"Because there is no need of that."

"Why no need of it?" Margate frowned quickly.

"Because Madame Clayton did not go that way," Nick explained, now shaping his course in accord with what he thought the rascal really wanted. "She would surely have been seen and detained, if not recognized and brought back here. It is safe to assume that she went through the rear street, where there are few persons even during the day, and only scattered dwellings."

"That's right, Carter, after all," declared Margate, with face lighting. "She must have gone that way."

"It's that way for us, therefore," said Nick, while they walked rapidly through the rear grounds, quickly reaching the deserted street. "Danny now can go one way, Garside, while we go the other."

"Let him go to the right, then, while we seek her in this direction," Margate quickly suggested, pointing in the direction of the Busby place, less than an eighth of a mile away.

Nick consented without a moment's hesitation.

"Come on, then," said he. "That way for you, Danny."

Danny hurried away in the direction indicated.

"I'm deucedly sorry for this one reason, Garside, at least," Nick gravely remarked, as they hastened through the narrow street.

"What reason is that, Mr. Carter?" Margate inquired, with a covert leer.

"Because I had a Philadelphia specialist coming here this morning to diagnose Madame Clayton's illness."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. I would have called with him about ten o'clock."

"What's the big idea? What do you suspect?"

"I have not quite liked the looks of that nurse, Garside, from the start," Nick glibly explained.

"That so?"

"She don't look good to me. I'm far from sure that she has not been drugging Madame Clayton," Nick added.

"But what could she gain from that?"

"I've got to dig deeper into the case, Garside, before I can answer that question."

"It's doubly necessary, then, for us to find Madame Clayton."

"Exactly."

"We may succeed in doing so. She surely could not have gone very far in her weak and abnormal condition!"

"So I think," Nick agreed. "That's why I have undertaken to trace her."

They had come within view of Busby's upper windows while they were talking.

Margate gazed sharply ahead, then glanced back over his shoulder.

The narrow street was deserted in both directions. As well as one could have told, no mortal eye was observing the two hurrying men.

Margate drew out a white handkerchief, holding it conspicuously in his hand for a moment and then wiping his face with it.

Nick Carter did not appear to observe him. He had known from the first, nevertheless, that the rascal was trying to lure him to some place where, no doubt, Patsy Garvan had been cornered the previous night, he having failed to report the result of this espionage.

Nick now was convinced, too, that his companion had signaled to some one in the grim stone house which they were rapidly approaching.

This was confirmed a moment later, for Busby himself suddenly appeared at the grille gate, when the two men were scarce ten feet from it.

"We might inquire of this fellow," Margate suggested quietly.

"We will, Garside," Nick muttered.

There was no need for inquiries, however, for Busby stepped out and quickly accosted them, with a look of grave concern on his wrinkled face.

"I say, gents, you're not looking for a stray woman, are you?" he asked, glancing from one to the other.

"That's precisely what we are looking for," Nick replied, with well-feigned eagerness.

"By gracious, then, it's lucky I happened out here just as you came along," declared Busby, with manifest relief.

"An elderly woman," Nick added.

"That's right. She pulled my bell along about three o'clock this morning," said Busby, pointing. "I came out and found her sitting on the sidewalk. She was only partly dressed and didn't seem to be right in the head. I took her in and my wife put her to bed. We don't know who she is from a side of leather. I've sent for a doctor, but he hasn't showed up. I was just coming out to look for him."

"By Jove, this is good news, indeed, Carter," cried Margate, clapping the detective on the shoulder. "I'll go in with you and make sure there is no mistake, and I then will rush back and relieve Mr. Clayton and his wife."

"Good enough!" Nick exclaimed, as if utterly void of suspicion. "Lead the way, my man, and permit us to identify this woman. If the lady for whom we are seeking, you shall be well paid for what you have done."

"You, too, shall be well paid for what you have done," thought Margate grimly, while both hastened into the inclosed grounds.

Nick heard Busby close and lock the heavy grille gate, but the sound brought no ominous misgivings to the mind of the detective. He already knew that the net he had spread was fast closing tightly around his victims.

Busby, having closed the gate, hurried on ahead.

Nick followed him up the steps and into the grim old house, into a dimly lighted, bare-looking hall, Mar-

gate bringing up in the rear and quickly closing the door.

"This way, gents," said Busby. "We've put the lady in a bedroom on this floor."

He hastened into a rear parlor while speaking, Nick following.

As the detective crossed the threshold, he received a violent push from behind, a shove that sent him nearly across the room.

Nick turned like a flash and found himself confronted, not by two men, but by four—Margate, Busby, and their two confederates of the previous night, each with a revolver aimed point-blank at his head.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LAST CALL.

Twenty minutes later found Nick Carter seated in the chemist's laboratory, not only seated there, but tied hand and foot with stout cords and securely bound to his chair.

His companions were the four men by whom he had been held up—precisely as he had expected to be.

There was only one other occupant of the room—Patsy Garvan.

He was lying on the floor in one corner, insensible from a drug administered by Busby the previous night.

Margate had removed his disguise and tossed it upon the table. That he had the famous detective helplessly in his power, he had not the shadow of a doubt. It had impelled him to do what he had done the night before, when talking with Patsy Garvan—to vaunt his evil exploits, to boast of what he was about to accomplish, to express his vicious hatred of his hearer, and much that he had said to Patsy, he now had said to Nick.

Not one of his confederates had ventured to interfere.

Aside from his surprise at beholding Margate, whose identity he really had not suspected, the effect of all that the rascal had been saying was not manifest in the detective's face. He had appeared as unmoved and severe as a man of bronze while he mutely listened.

Not until Busby began to growl with impatience, whereupon Margate seemed about to end the scene, did Nick take steps to prolong it, knowing well what soon must occur.

"Get Clayton's fortune, eh?" he then remarked, picking up a prediction Margate had just made. "So that has been your game, much in line with what you twice have attempted. Do you expect to meet with more success this third time, Margate, that you have declared yourself so boldly?"

Margate laughed derisively and pointed to the senseless form of the detective's assistant.

"Does that, with your own situation, look like success?" he questioned, with a mocking sneer. "Oh, I've got you this time, Carter, and there is no loophole through which you can escape. You undertook last night to trap me with a ruse, but I have turned the tables on you. I have you where I want you, where I long have wanted you, and, as for the game I am playing—well, I shall make good. I will stake my life upon that."

"Your life may be the price, Margate."

"Not through your agency, Carter."

"You evidently have overlooked one danger with which you are menaced," Nick said sternly.

Margate's brows knit quickly.

"What is that?" he demanded.

"The murder of Doctor Thorpe."

"Rot! That cuts no ice."

"No?"

"You have dug into that in vain, Carter. You can make nothing of it. You could form no theory consistent with the circumstances. I have been sure of that from the first."

Nick thought of this man's mother, of her terrible secret, of the trust she had reposed in him, and he withheld the words that would have caused Margate's evil heart to have sunk like lead. He said simply, yet impressively:

"I know more, Margate, than I did at first."

"What do you imply by that?" snapped Margate suspiciously.

"I think I now can guess why Doctor Thorpe was killed, and also prove who killed him."

"Rot! What theory have you now formed?"

"Madame Clayton telephoned to me, Margate, just before the fatal shot was fired. I heard her voice and the report of the weapon."

"But she spoke only your name," Margate impulsively cried. "I'm sure of that, and——"

"Stop!" Nick sternly interrupted. "You could not be sure of it, could not possibly know it—if you had not been there."

Margate recoiled with a scowl.

"You see that you betray yourself, Margate, if that were necessary," Nick quickly added. "But it is not, Margate, since I now can guess precisely what occurred and what caused the crime."

"You can, eh?" Margate's voice took on a husky harshness.

"Easily," snapped Nick, more sharply. "Madame Clayton saw by chance that scar on your head, probably that very evening, and she suspected your identity. That must have been after her son and his wife left the house. Doctor Thorpe called only incidentally, presumably to see Clayton. Burdened with her terrible discovery, she confided your criminal career and her consequent fears to the physician, and he advised her to call me by telephone and confer with me. She attempted to do so, and you, returning home and approaching the open French window at the time, and apprehending that your present knavish game would be thwarted—you shot him to prevent his revealing what the woman had told him. You then overcame her, or she may have fainted, and you drugged her and threw her into the condition in which I found her, bent upon keeping her so till you could carry out your designs upon Clayton. You planted the evidence that I found, and you since have had the woman's nurse in your employ. That, Margate, is how and why it was done. There is little need to add to these details, little to assert that they are true, and that——"

Nick broke off abruptly.

Busby's wife had appeared at the laboratory door.

Margate swung round like a flash, with his ghastly face showing plainly how near Nick had come to the truth. He started up, crying harshly:

"Why are you here, Nancy? What do you want? Leave us to send these infernal sleuths to perdition."

Nancy Busby did not fear him.

"I'm here with a reason," she retorted. "There's a man at the front door to see you."

"See me?" cried Margate, staring. "What man?"

"He says his name is Peterson, and as how he's got a message for you."

Nick Carter's face did not change by so much as a shadow.

"Peterson!" Margate spoke, with a gasp. "Don't be alarmed, mates. He's the house butler. He must have seen me coming here, or this way. Wait while I see what he wants."

"He will not keep you waiting long," thought Nick, with grim satisfaction.

Margate had hurriedly replaced his disguise, and he now hastened to the front door and opened it.

Peterson stood bowing on the steps, sedate and solemn, but with an unusual gleam in his eyes.

"Why are you here, Peterson?" Margate demanded, governing his voice with an effort. "What do you want?"

"Well, Mr. Garside, sir, it's like this," Peterson deliberately explained. "I want, Mr. Garside, sir, a hand in the game you are playing, and a bit of the stake."

Other figures, with weapons drawn, were stealing nearer the door, hugging the wall of the house.

"If I'm not to have it, Mr. Garside, sir—I want you, instead!"

Peterson rang out the last with a voice that Margate remembered only too well, the voice of the man who had sent a bullet at his head long months before. And Peterson's revolver leaped from his pocket and covered the staggering crook.

"Heavens above!" Margate gasped, while reeling. "Chick Carter!"

Then the fiend in him arose supreme, or in his brain a maddening vision of the electric chair. With a fierce shriek, regardless of the weapon, he leaped at Chick Carter's throat.

Chick met him halfway and tried to grapple him and avoid shooting him, but the weapon was discharged almost on the instant.

Margate's muscles went lax, his knees gave way under him. He uttered one groan, with head drooping, then fell from the detective's arms and rolled down the stone steps, shot through the heart.

"This way, boys!" Chick shouted, dashing through the hall. "Nail every man."

There was little need to thus instruct the half dozen officers who were following him—and little need for their display of weapons. For when they poured into the laboratory, the three dismayed crooks threw their hands into the air, nor lowered them save for the manacles.

The two women, Busby's wife and Martha Dryden, were secured a little later, and one and all subsequently received long prison terms for their crimes.

One alone, Dave Margate, had gone to a higher tribunal for punishment.

In view of Nick Carter's deductions, which covered most of the ground, together with what had passed between Patsy and Margate, but little need be added to these closing pages.

Patsy was quickly revived with an antidote, grimly supplied by Busby after he found himself under arrest, and the young detective was none the worse for his experience.

Madame Clayton was found in an upper room, still unconscious. But she afterward was restored and entirely recovered, when her story of the murder confirmed the conclusions at which Nick already had arrived. Her secret died with her recreant son, for the detective's lips were forever sealed, and others never knew of the twin relationship.

Nick Carter slipped in enough fiction to form a consistent story, in his report of the case, and Mr. Chester Clayton, nor the public, never knew the whole truth. It was better so, far better—and so it may be left.

THE END.

"The Yellow Label; or, Nick Carter and the Society Looters," will be the title of the long, complete story which you will find in the next issue, No. 160, of the NICK CARTER STORIES, out October 2d. In this story Nick Carter pits his ability against a gang of crafty society crooks. Then, too, you will also find an installment of the serial now running in this publication, together with several other articles of interest.

SNAPSHOT ARTILLERY.

By BERTRAM LEBHAR.

(This interesting story was commenced in No. 153 of NICK CARTER STORIES. Back numbers can always be obtained from your news dealer or the publishers.)

CHAPTER XXVI.

A BIG HIT.

Before the hour for going to press arrived, two more attempts were made to prevent the Bulletin's snapshots from reaching the public. The first of these was an endeavor to persuade Carroll's printers and pressmen to go on strike. The men were approached by a local politician, who offered them tempting cash inducements to refuse to get out the paper. But both the composing-room and pressroom forces indignantly refused to listen to this sinister suggestion. They all liked their young employer, and admired him for the plucky fight he was making. There was not a man of them whose loyalty could be shaken. So this attempt proved as futile as had been the effort to bribe the *Bulletin's* photo-engraver.

The other attempt was of a more violent nature. Just as the paper was going to press, a gang of hoodlums endeavored to force their way into the Bulletin Building, with the obvious intention of invading the pressroom, and smashing the forms. But Carroll barred the doors, and from a window of the editorial rooms addressed the band of toughs, displaying a revolver, and threatening to shoot the first man who dared to set foot within the premises. There was a note in his voice which caused them to believe that he meant business, and kept them back.

This last effort of the enemy having failed, like the others, nothing else occurred to interfere with the getting out the *Bulletin*, and a few hours later, the citizens of Oldham were chuckling over Hawley's snapshots, and warmly praising Carroll's newspaper for its enterprise and fearlessness.

The success of the *Bulletin's* exposé was even greater than the Camera Chap had predicted. Not only was the entire issue sold out, but the name of Carroll's newspaper was on every tongue, which, of course, was a fine thing from the standpoint of future circulation; for the more a newspaper is talked about, the more it is read.

In fact, many persons who found it impossible to obtain copies of the paper, on account of the unprecedented demand, called at the *Bulletin* office that day, and paid for a year's subscription, so as to guard against the possibility of such a thing happening again.

Letters of congratulation came pouring in by every mail. "Constant Reader," "Pro Bono Publico," "Vox Populi," and a host of others eagerly wrote to thank the editor of the *Bulletin* for the public service which he had rendered.

For while, as has been said above, Hawley's snapshots appealed to the sense of humor of many, and were provocative of chuckles, there were as many more who saw the serious side of the situation, and were stirred to righteous wrath by the shameful conditions which the *Bulletin* had revealed to them.

These good people were in the habit of going to bed early, and therefore never would have discovered that the city was not being properly and faithfully policed at night if Carroll's newspaper had not opened their eyes.

A delegation of taxpayers, thirty strong, called at the city hall that morning, and demanded an audience with the mayor.

Each of them had a copy of the current issue of the *Bulletin* in his hand, and each of them had fire in his eye. When they were ushered into the mayor's private office they proceeded to deliver themselves of utterances so forceful and to the point that his honor squirmed in his chair as he listened.

As soon as they had gone, Mayor Henkel reached for the telephone on his desk, and called up police headquarters.

"Is that you, Hodgins?" he growled into the transmitter.

"Yes, Mr. Mayor." Chief Hodgins' voice was very meek, and a trifle unsteady. He, too, had seen the *Bulletin* that morning.

"Come on over here at once!" snarled his honor. "I want to see you."

The chief lost no time in getting over to the city hall. Not that he was intensely eager for this interview, but he gathered the impression from the tone of the mayor's voice over the wire that its owner was more than a trifle peevish, and he knew better than to keep him waiting when he was in such a mood.

"I suppose you've seen the *Bulletin?*" snapped the mayor, as Hodgins stepped into the room.

"Yes, Mr. Mayor. Of course, I don't make a practice of readin' that disreputable sheet, but somebody happened to hand me a copy this mornin', and called my attention to the—ahem—dastardly outrage on the front page. Ain't it fierce, Mr. Mayor?"

His honor glared at him. "Yes, it's fierce, all right!" he growled. "But it's only what we've got to expect when we've got a bonehead like you at the head of the department."

The chief's round face turned purple. "Now, see here, Mr. Mayor," he said plaintively, "is it fair to blame me when you——"

"Never mind that now," his honor interrupted curtly. "I'll attend to your case later on—and to all those others who have gone and got my administration in bad by getting their pictures in that confounded newspaper. I'm going to teach you all a lesson you won't forget in a hurry, I promise you. But that'll keep for a little while. There's something else that I want to attend to first. Do you know who took those snapshots for the *Bulletin?*"

"I am told that it was that young loafer from New York named Hawley, who——" began the chief.

"So it was he, was it? I suspected as much," Mayor Henkle muttered. "Do you know where he is at this moment, Hodgins?"

"No, I don't," replied the chief of police, with a scowl. "But I guess I can find him, all right. I am going to court as soon as I leave here, to swear out a warrant for his arrest; and then I——"

"You're going to do nothing of the kind," his honor broke in, with much vehemence. "You big, blundering boob, haven't you got enough sense to realize that we can't arrest him?"

"Why not?" demanded Hodgins in great astonishment. "He took those snapshots without a license, didn't he? That's a clear violation of the law. It seems to me that here's a fine opportunity to put the scamp behind bars for six months. He can't beat the case this time."

"Oh, it seems that way to you, does it?" sneered his honor. "Well, maybe if you stop to think for a minute, you'll realize what effect it would have upon the people of this town if we were to send that chap to jail for taking those pictures. It would be regarded as a piece of spite work, and public sentiment would be dead against us. I don't want that."

"What do you propose to do, then?" inquired Hodgins, making no effort to conceal his disappointment.

"Go and find that camera man, and bring him to me," the mayor commanded. "Don't arrest him. Persuade him to come here under a flag of truce. I want to talk with him."

CHAPTER XXVII.

A SHREWD SUGGESTION.

Although Carroll tried hard to persuade him to make an abrupt exit from the town of Oldham immediately after the publication of the sensational snapshots, Hawley persisted in lingering in the *Bulletin* office.

"I want to see the fun, Fred," he explained. "The sight of the populace pouring in to buy papers and shower congratulations upon the editor is such a great treat that I can't tear myself away. Just let me hang around and watch the harvest, and I'll promise to keep quiet, and not get in your way."

The proprietor of the *Bulletin* smiled deprecatingly. "Of course, you're not in my way, old man," he said. "Don't talk rot. It's only because of the danger to yourself that I'm anxious to get rid of you. Don't you realize that every minute you remain in this town you run the risk of being nabbed by the police and railroaded to jail? You can be sure Hodgins has already gone to court and sworn out a warrant for your arrest. I'm surprised that he or some of his men haven't been around here before now, looking for you. But no doubt they'll be here soon. Take my advice, Frank, and get away before it is too late."

"Oh, I guess there's no danger," the Camera Chap replied coolly. "If they do come here with a warrant, there must be lots of places in this building in which I can hide while they're searching. But the chances are they won't come here; they'll figure that I've skipped out of town. It is always——"

He did not complete the remark, for just then Miggsy stepped up and addressed them excitedly.

"Chief Hodgins is comin' up the stairs," the boy announced breathlessly. "Beat it quick, Mr. Hawley, if you don't want to get pinched!"

The Camera Chap jumped hastily to his feet, and glanced about the big editorial room in search of a means of escape.

"Use that stairway over there, Frank," exclaimed Carroll. "It leads to the pressroom. You'll find some place to hide in down there. Don't attempt to leave the building just yet. He may have the place surrounded with his men."

As Hawley dashed down this private stairway, Carroll rushed toward the door of the editorial room, with the intention of barricading it by dragging a desk in front of it, for there was no lock.

But before he could do this, the portly form of the chief of police was in the doorway.

"Well, sir, what do you wish?" demanded the proprietor of the *Bulletin*, stepping in front of the police official. "You can't come in here. Nobody but members of the staff are permitted in this room."

Carroll had no hope of being able to keep Hodgins out, for he believed that the latter was armed with a warrant. He was merely sparring for time in order to give the Camera Chap a chance to reach the pressroom in the basement.

There was a scowl upon the chief's face. It went very much against his grain to pay this visit to the office of the newspaper which he so cordially hated; but he had been ordered to find the Camera Chap and bring him to the city hall immediately, and, fearful of the mayor's wrath if he failed, he thought it best to attend to the matter himself.

"I want that feller Hawley," he announced brusquely. "Where is he?"

Carroll shrugged his shoulders. "Ask me an easier one. Surely you didn't expect to find him here? I should think you'd give him credit for more sense than that. Hasn't he already given you proof that he possesses intelligence?"

The scowl on Hodgins' face deepened. "Aw, cut it out!" he growled. "You know where he is, all right. I ain't goin' to do him any harm. If you'll produce him, I'll promise you that I won't place him under arrest."

Carroll laughed ironically. "Oh, no; of course not," he sneered. "You wish merely to shake him by the hand, and compliment him upon the excellence of his snapshots in to-day's *Bulletin*. I understand."

The face of the chief of police turned the color of a ripe plum.

"If I had my way, I'd march him to jail so quick that it'd make his head swim," he said furiously. "And I'd do the same with you, too, you fresh young muckraker. But I'm telling you the truth," he added more mildly. "I ain't come here now to arrest him. I'm here to invite him to come over to the city hall and see the mayor. His honor wants to have a talk with him—a friendly chat. If you don't believe that's on the level, you can get the mayor on the phone and ask him."

"Oh, I guess I won't bother," said Carroll, still incredulous. "Tell the mayor that if he wants to see Mr. Hawley he'll have to go to New York."

"Do you mean to say that he's gone back to New York?" exclaimed Hodgins uneasily.

"If he's followed my advice, he must be on his way there by this time," was the guarded reply.

The chief seemed to be stunned by this information. For a full minute he stood there, silent and frowning. And then, greatly to Carroll's astonishment, he swung on his heel and departed without a word.

Unable to believe that he had got rid of him so easily, and suspecting some trick, Carroll stepped to a window of the editorial room, which commanded a view of the entrance to the Bulletin Building. He saw Hodgins emerge from the building, and walk slowly up the street toward the city hall, without once looking back.

"Looks as if he's really gone," the proprietor of the *Bulletin* muttered. "Queer that he didn't insist upon searching."

Then he went downstairs to the pressroom to assure the Camera Chap that for the time being, at least, the danger was passed.

Chief Hodgins had gone away really convinced that Hawley had gone back to New York. It was just what a young man placed in the Camera Chap's position might be expected to do, he thought; so he was quite ready to believe it.

He started for the city hall with the intention of reporting to the mayor that the bird had already flown, but as he neared the building he chanced to encounter his young friend Gale.

The latter smiled dubiously when he heard of Hawley's supposed departure. "I wouldn't be too sure that he's gone, if I were you, chief," he remarked. "Although I haven't any use for Hawley, I've got to admit that he has plenty of nerve; it wouldn't be at all like him to run away at this time. Besides, I've got good reason to believe that he's still in Oldham. I've made a discovery."

"You have?" exclaimed Hodgins eagerly. "What is it?"

"As perhaps you are aware, Hawley came to town on a motor cycle, which he borrowed from the friend with whom he is stopping up in the mountains. I have discovered that the motor cycle is still in the garage on Main Street, where Hawley checked it. While it remains there, isn't it reasonable to assume that he is still in town?"

"Not necessarily," Hodgins replied. "He may have forgotten it; or he may have notified his friend to send for it."

"Very true," Gale admitted. "Both of those theories are plausible, of course; but still, I think that it is a clew well worth following. If I were you, chief, I'd assign a detective to watch that garage, in the hope that Hawley may come for the wheel."

Hodgins nodded. "That's not a half bad idea, young feller," he graciously declared. "I can see that you're your father's son, all right. Cleverness surely does run in the Gale family. I am going to do as you suggest."

So instead of going to the city hall, Hodgins turned about and went to police headquarters. Picking out two of his best detectives, he assigned them to watch the Invincible Garage, on Main Street, and to shadow whoever came there to claim a certain motor cycle. If it was Hawley himself who came for the wheel, the detectives were instructed to grab him, and notify Chief Hodgins immediately.

Several hours later, the chief had good cause to congratulate himself upon this move, for one of the detec-

tives called up on the telephone, and informed him that they had captured the Camera Chap.

"He came for the motor cycle himself," the detective explained over the wire. "The chump walked right into our hands, boss. Mike is holding him now, while I'm telephoning."

"All right; I'll be right over," said Hodgins. "Hold him tight until I get there. If you let him get away it will cost both of you your shields."

That the Camera Chap had been captured was indeed true. After lingering in the *Bulletin* office for several hours after the visit of the chief of police, he had gone to the garage with the intention of taking his motor cycle and returning to his host's mountain retreat.

He realized that he ran some danger of being recognized as he walked along Main Street, but the distance from the *Bulletin* office to the Invincible Garage was so short that he thought he could safely risk it.

The possibility of the place being watched by some of Hodgins' men, in expectation of his coming, did not enter his mind, and, therefore, when he reached the garage without being challenged, he considered himself out of danger.

It was a great shock to him when, just as he was wheeling the motor cycle out to the street, the two detectives pounced upon him, and told him fiercely that if he preferred a whole skin to a broken one he had better keep very still, and give them no trouble.

Those men were big and brawny, and they were so sore at their captive for the injury he had done Oldham's police force that they would have been well pleased if he had offered resistance so they would have had justification for using violence. But Hawley disappointed them in this respect. He accepted the situation with a rueful smile. He fully believed that he was booked for jail, and the prospect was not pleasant, but he saw no use in making a fuss about it.

Chief Hodgins arrived at the garage a few minutes later, and took personal charge of the prisoner.

Greatly to the latter's astonishment, he was not taken to police headquarters. He was marched to the city hall, and conducted by Hodgins into the private office of the mayor.

And what astonished him still more was the fact that the mayor received him with a pleasant smile.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A CHAT WITH THE MAYOR.

So friendly was the mayor's greeting that the Camera Chap thought, at first, that his honor could not be aware of the identity of his visitor. Surely the head of Oldham's government could have no reason for feeling kindly disposed toward the chap who had given that government such a severe jolt.

Great, then, was Hawley's amazement when Mayor Henkle, after beaming beatifically upon him, turned to Chief Hodgins and said pleasantly:

"So this is the young man whose snapshots in this morning's *Bulletin* have created such a stir in town?"

The chief of police scowled. "Yes, this is the—er—this is the young man." He had intended to end the sentence differently, but a warning glance from his honor caused him to modify his words.

Mayor Henkle leaned forward in his chair, and extended a huge hand, the back of which was as hairy as a gorilla's paw, toward the Camera Chap.

"Mr. Hawley, let me congratulate you upon that achievement," he said. "Those pictures are great—simply immense."

"Glad you liked them, Mr. Mayor," said Hawley, as he grasped the outstretched hand. To himself he said: "Now, I wonder what the deuce can be the meaning of this taffy?"

The Camera Chap was not the only person whose curiosity was aroused by the Honorable Martin Henkle's demeanor. Chief Hodgins' eyes opened wide with wonder as he heard his boss congratulating the author of those snapshots. Hodgins knew that the mayor, though a gruff, bullying type of man, could be as smooth and urbane as a courtier when it suited his purpose to be so; but the chief was at a loss to imagine what the mayor's purpose could be in the present instance.

It looked as if his curiosity would have to go unsatisfied, however, for he was not permitted to hear the rest of the conversation.

"I guess we won't detain you any longer, chief," said the mayor, waving his hand toward the door. "I realize that your time is valuable; besides, Mr. Hawley and I wish to have a little confidential chat together."

Hodgins saluted stiffly, and started to withdraw, but as he neared the doorway he thought of something which caused him to hesitate.

"Aren't you going—don't you wish me to take charge of this—er—young man when you get through with him?" he inquired anxiously.

"Certainly not," replied his honor indignantly. "Mr. Hawley is not a prisoner. He is here as my guest. When this interview is over, he will be free to depart, and I'll make it hot for anybody that interferes with him. I thought that I had thoroughly impressed that fact upon your mind, chief."

"Now, I wonder what the deuce can be the meaning of this?" said the Camera Chap to himself once more. "It certainly sounds too good to be true."

"Yes, Mr. Hawley, those pictures in this morning's *Bulletin* were a remarkably clever piece of work," Mayor Henkle declared, as the door closed behind the chief of police. "As soon as I saw them I made up my mind that I was going to send for the man who took them, and tell him what I thought of them. I can appreciate pluck and skill, Mr. Hawley, even when they are directed against myself. The fact that those snapshots of yours are somewhat of a black eye to my administration, doesn't prevent me from being glad to shake hands with you."

"You are certainly broad-minded, Mr. Mayor," the Camera Chap said politely.

"Well, yes; I guess I am," the Honorable Martin Henkle admitted. "A man has got to be broad-minded, I guess, in order to get along in public life. By the way, Mr. Hawley, how long do you intend to honor us with your presence in Oldham?"

"I can't say exactly," the Camera Chap answered, somewhat astonished at the abruptness of the question. "It all depends."

"Depends upon what?" the mayor inquired eagerly.

"Upon how long a leave of absence I can get from my managing editor. I am on the staff of the New York *Sentinel*, you know. I am here merely on a vacation. I came here originally with the intention of staying only a

few days, but I am thinking of writing to Mr. Paxton—he's the managing editor of the *Sentinel*—to ask if he won't let me remain for several weeks longer."

"Humph! And what is your reason for wanting to remain?"

"Oh, there are several reasons, Mr. Mayor. For one thing, I like the climate. I took this vacation on account of my health, you know, and this bracing air does me a world of good."

The mayor frowned. "Give me another reason."

"Well, to be quite candid with you, I want to stay and help my friend Fred Carroll get out the *Bulletin*," the Camera Chap replied.

The frown upon the mayor's face deepened. "You haven't written that letter to your managing editor yet, have you, Mr. Hawley?" he inquired.

"Not yet. I intend to write it this evening."

"I wouldn't, if I were you."

"Why not?"

"Because," Mayor Henkle replied slowly, "even if your editor is willing to extend your leave of absence, you're not going to stay here. You're going back to New York immediately, Mr. Hawley."

The Camera Chap grinned. "You mean you're going to banish me from Oldham, Mr. Mayor?"

"That's an ugly way of putting it," protested his honor, with a deprecating smile. "We won't call it being banished. I am going to ask you, as a favor to me, to cut your vacation short, and return to New York."

"And suppose I refuse to go?"

"You won't refuse," was the grim reply. "You impress me as being a sensible young man. I suppose you realize, Mr. Hawley, that we can send you to jail, right now, for taking those snapshots without a license. We have a clear case against you."

The Camera Chap nodded. "Yes, I suppose you have."

"But I don't want to send you to jail," the mayor continued. "I like you, and, as I said before, I admire the pluck and cleverness you displayed in getting those pictures. I think it would be a great pity to put such a talented man behind bars. So I am giving you this chance."

He glanced at the clock on the wall. "It is just four p. m. There is a train for New York at seven. I guess you ought to be able to get ready in three hours. Will you promise me to leave on that train, Mr. Hawley?"

The Camera Chap smiled ruefully.

"I suppose I have no choice in the matter. I hate to leave Oldham, but, of course, I'd rather do that than go to jail."

There was a long pause. The mayor seemed to be turning something over in his mind. His keen gaze was fixed searchingly upon the Camera Chap's face, and twice his lips moved, as though he were about to speak, but each time the words remained unspoken.

Then, with sudden decision, he leaned forward in his chair, and said quietly:

"There is one other alternative, Mr. Hawley. An idea has just presented itself to me which seems to me a vast improvement on my original plan of forcing you to leave town. If you wish, you can remain in Oldham—without going to jail—and earn fifty dollars besides."

"That sounds much more agreeable," declared the Camera Chap laughingly. "What have I got to do to earn that alluring sum?"

"Something very easy. You will merely have to make a short affidavit."

"To what effect?"

"That those snapshots which the *Bulletin* published this morning were fakes."

Hawley arched his eyebrows. "Fakes? I don't quite get you, Mr. Mayor. How could those pictures be fakes?"

"I don't know how they could be," was the mayor's reply. "I don't understand much about photography. But I feel confident that an expert like yourself will be able to dope out an explanation which will sound convincing. I shall leave the details of the affidavit entirely to you."

Hawley grinned. "I guess I get you now, Mr. Mayor. May I inquire what you intend to do with this affidavit, provided you get it?"

"I intend to publish it on the front page of to-morrow's *Bulletin*."

The start of surprise which the Camera Chap gave at this answer was genuine.

"The *Bulletin*? You mean the *Chronicle*, don't you, Mr. Mayor?" he inquired.

"I mean the *Bulletin*. It will be published in the *Chronicle*, also—I want it to have as much publicity as possible—but to get it on the front page of the *Bulletin* is the main thing. I want everybody who saw those pictures to-day to learn that they are fakes when they see the paper to-morrow."

Hawley was so amused by this amazing proposal that he forgot to be indignant. "And may I ask how you propose to get it into the *Bulletin*, Mr. Mayor?" he inquired, with an ironical smile. "Are you going to request my friend Carroll to print it as a personal favor to you?"

"Yes, I am," was the astonishing reply. "And I guess your friend Carroll will be ready enough to do me the favor when he hears my proposition. I'm going to offer to bury the hatchet. He's gone pretty far with that confounded sheet of his. There are some things he's done that lots of men in public life would never forgive or forget. But, as you have remarked, Mr. Hawley, I'm broad-minded. I'm willing to let bygones be bygones. You can go and tell Carroll that if he wants to come over to the city hall and shake hands with me, he'll find me ready."

"I'll tell him," said the Camera Chap dryly, "but I doubt very much if he'll come, Mr. Mayor. My friend Carroll is a peculiar fellow."

"Oh, he'll come, all right!" the Honorable Martin Henkle declared confidently. "You just whisper in his ear that as soon as the *Bulletin* makes itself right with the administration, that bunch of advertising goes back into its columns, and I'll bet my bank roll he'll hurry over. You can tell him, too, that as soon as we're friends, the *Bulletin* will get all the news at police headquarters and the other public departments, same as it used to before the scrap."

"All right; I'll tell him," said the Camera Chap, taking a step toward the door. "But I still doubt very much if he'll come, Mr. Mayor. The *Bulletin* is going to have so very much big advertising that he probably wouldn't be able to find room for that piker bunch of ads you caused to be taken out, and which you are now offering to put back again.

"And as for the news at police headquarters, and the other public departments," Hawley went on, taking another step toward the door, "why, I'm afraid he won't have much room for that, either. You see, Mr. Mayor, the

Bulletin's columns are going to be so taken up the next few months booming the People's Party candidate for mayor, that there won't be space for much else."

Mayor Henkle frowned. "The People's Party candidate for mayor, eh? Who is he?"

"Fred Carroll," Hawley answered solemnly. "After much persuasion, my friend Carroll has consented to run at the coming election. He is going to announce it in to-morrow's *Bulletin*."

The mayor's frown changed into a derisive sneer. "The People's Party!" he sneered. "Who are they? I never heard of 'em before."

"To be quite frank with you, Mr. Mayor," the Camera Chap replied, with a smile, "neither did I. The party hasn't been formed yet. Carroll is going to organize it himself out of the *Bulletin's* readers."

Martin Henkle shrugged his shoulders. "If Carroll wants to make an idiot of himself, I can't stop him, of course," he growled. "But if he's got an ounce of sense he'll accept my proposition, and turn that lean, hungry paper of his into a profitable sheet. You put it up to him, Mr. Hawley, and see what he thinks about it."

"Very well, Mr. Mayor," said the Camera Chap politely. "I'll make it a point to see him before I take the seven o'clock train to New York."

The latter part of this answer seemed to astonish the mayor. "But you're not going to take the seven o'clock train to New York," he protested. "You're going to stay in Oldham and earn that fifty dollars by making the affidavit."

"I think not," the Camera Chap rejoined quietly.

"Suppose we make it a hundred dollars instead of fifty?"

Hawley shook his head. "Not if you were to make it a hundred thousand dollars, Mr. Mayor!" he declared.

The tone in which he said it ought to have convinced Martin Henkle that it was useless to attempt to alter his decision, but the latter did not quite give up hope of getting that affidavit. He knew that newspaper photographers were poorly paid, as a rule, and, not supposing that Hawley was any exception to that rule, he thought that a hundred dollars must look like a lot of money to him. Even though he refused it now, he no doubt would change his mind after he had had a little time to consider the many things he could do with that sum.

"Well, think it over, Mr. Hawley," the mayor said. "No use deciding hastily. If you change your mind before the New York train leaves, drop in here again and let me know. I'll be at the city hall until then. Remember, you get that hundred just as soon as you put your signature to the affidavit."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE RIVAL CANDIDATE.

Fred Caroll's joy over the success of the *Bulletin's* police exposé was marred by the thought that the girl he loved was likely to suffer for the part she had played in it.

If it had not been for Melba, the *Bulletin* could not have published the snapshots which had created such a great stir in Oldham. No doubt Melba's uncle and cousin, realizing this fact, would do their utmost to make the girl regret the devoted service which she had rendered their enemy.

This thought worried Carroll exceedingly. So anxious was he concerning her that, at length, he decided to send a messenger to her with a note, urging her to let him know immediately how things were going with her at home.

He would have called up the Gale residence on the telephone, but Melba had cautioned him that such a proceeding was dangerous, as the telephone at the house was a double one, and Martha, her uncle's shrewish old housekeeper, was in the habit of listening at the extension instrument upstairs whenever she, Melba, spoke over the wire downstairs. Such conversations Martha always reported in detail to her master when he came home.

Carroll thought that it would be safe to risk sending a note to the house. He intended to make Miggsy its bearer, and that youngster had on several occasions demonstrated his ability to deliver notes to Miss Gale without running foul of the housekeeper's sharp old eyes.

However, the missive was never sent; for, just as he was writing it, Melba entered the *Bulletin's* editorial room, and, unannounced, stepped up to his desk.

"Congratulations, Fred!" she exclaimed brightly. "Your editorial and Mr. Hawley's snapshots have certainly made a great hit. They're the talk of the town. The word *Bulletin* was on the lips of every second person I passed on my way here."

Carroll was greatly relieved to see that she was smiling, and apparently quite at ease. Evidently she had not as yet been visited with her uncle's and cousin's displeasure; or, if she had, at least she didn't seem to be any the worse for it.

"Yes," he responded, as he dragged a chair toward her, "I guess we've stirred the town up some; and, what's more important, we're reaping the harvest. Our circulation department has been doing a land-office business; our entire edition is completely sold out, and I've got a bunch of new subscriptions. Several ads have come in to-day, too. They're only small ones, but they're ready money. The outlook begins to look encouraging. And I owe it all to you, little girl. If it hadn't been for your pluck and cleverness in getting those films away from——"

"Hush!" she interrupted laughingly, putting her gloved hand over his mouth. "If you're going to talk like that, Fred, I'm going right out. I thought I'd drop in to congratulate you, and tell you a piece of news—two pieces of news, in fact—but I won't stay if you say another word in that strain."

"Well, it's the truth," he insisted, looking at her fondly. "Tell me how your uncle and cousin have been treating you since they found out how you beat them at their own game. I've been so anxious about you that I was just writing you a note."

"They didn't say a word to me about it—not even a gentle reproach from either of them," Melba answered.

"That's queer!" Carroll exclaimed in astonishment. "Can it be possible that they don't know that it was you who got the films away from their photo-engraving room? If so, isn't it highly imprudent of you to come here now, Melba? If they should learn about this visit, they might possibly put two and two together, you know."

"Oh, they must know of the trick I played them," the girl declared. "They couldn't help finding it out. The man up in their photo-engraving room knew me, and he must have told them what happened."

"And yet you say they didn't raise a fuss?" Carroll's tone was almost incredulous.

"Not the slightest, Fred. Isn't it odd? On the contrary, my uncle's manner to me last night and this morning was unusually kind and gentle; and as for my cousin —well, that's one of the startling items of news that I've come to tell you." Melba laughed softly. "Would it be a shock to you, Freddie, to learn that you have a rival?"

"A rival?" he repeated questioningly.

"Yes; a rival in love. My cousin asked me to marry him last night, Fred."

"What!" Carroll was so astonished that he fairly shouted the monosyllable.

"It's a fact, Fred," said Melba, smiling at his vehemence; "and he appeared to be very much in earnest, too."

"But I thought you told me the other day that he hated you?" Carroll reminded her.

"He has always given me that impression. He and I never got along well together, even as children. He has never taken any pains to conceal his dislike for me. Since his return from New York, his attitude toward me has been particularly mean—until last night."

Carroll scowled. "Well, if that's the case, what on earth made him propose to you?"

"That's what I'm anxious to know," Melba answered. "The more I think of the incident, Fred, the more it puzzles me. I was in hopes you might be able to suggest a reason for his sudden change. Ah! Here's some one who may be able to help us."

She pointed, as she spoke, toward Hawley, who came in at that moment to tell Carroll of his experience at the city hall.

"We want your advice, Mr. Hawley," the girl said, as the Camera Chap stepped up. "My cousin has asked me to marry him. Can you imagine a reason?"

"I can imagine a hundred reasons," the Camera Chap replied gallantly. "If you'll glance in a mirror, Miss Gale, you'll discover a lot of them for yourself. With all his faults, your cousin is human, you know—and he isn't blind."

"Thank you!" said Melba, laughing and blushing. "But I am really serious, Mr. Hawley. I am quite sure that my cousin isn't in love with me—in fact, as I was just saying to Fred, he cordially dislikes me. Besides, I happen to know that he's in love with another girl—an actress in New York. He's got her picture tacked on the wall in his room, and he writes to her every day. Now, what can be his object in proposing to me?"

"Oh, I guess that's easily explained," Hawley answered. "No doubt spite is his motive. He wants to win you away from Fred."

Carroll nodded. "Yes; that's it, of course. Wasn't our engagement mentioned during the conversation, girlie?"

"Not a word about it," Melba replied. "He didn't even mention your name, Fred. When I told him that it was quite out of the question for me to marry him, he merely said that he was sorry I felt that way about it, but that he was going to keep on trying until he persuaded me to change my mind."

Carroll was not at all pleased to hear this. "I suppose that means that he'll keep annoying you by forcing his attentions upon you," he said grimly.

"I suppose so," said Melba. "And, being under the same roof with him, that's going to be decidedly unpleasant. I almost think I'd prefer to have him treat me in his usual disagreeable manner. Probably my uncle, too, will pester me with arguments why I should marry his son. I can see myself having a pleasant time."

"If only I could afford to marry you now, and take you away from such distasteful surroundings!" Carroll said wistfully. "It's the dickens to be poor!"

Melba laughed heartily. "Never mind, Fred," she said soothingly. "Things will be coming our way soon. Judging from the hit your paper has made, you're not going to be poor much longer, is he, Mr. Hawley?"

"I hope not," the Camera Chap replied. "By the way, Fred, I've got a proposition to put up to you. It's from your friend Mayor Henkle. If you're tired of being poor, maybe you'll be glad to accept the offer that he makes."

With a twinkle in his eye, he proceeded to narrate his experience at the city hall, and Carroll received the news with great joy.

"So he wants to call off the fight, does he?" he chuckled. "I'm mighty glad to hear that, Frank. This is indeed good tidings."

"Why, Fred!" cried Melba in a shocked tone. "Surely you're not thinking of accepting that offer? I wouldn't believe——"

"Accepting it! I should say not!" was the indignant reply. "What do you take me for? All the money in the world couldn't make the *Bulletin* stop fighting Henkle and his gang. But I'm mighty glad to hear the news which Frank has brought. It shows that we've got that grafter worried. He must be dead scared, or he wouldn't have made these overtures of peace."

The Camera Chap nodded. "Yes, it certainly looks as if he has begun to see 'the writing on the wall.' He realizes that the power of the *Bulletin* is growing, and that it means the finish of him and his gang unless he can swing us over to his side.

"By the way, Fred," he added, with a chuckle. "I've launched your boom as candidate for the mayoralty of Oldham."

"Who—what?" exclaimed Carroll in great astonishment. "Yes; I told Henkle that you intend to be his successor in the city hall."

The proprietor of the *Bulletin* stared at him dazedly. "Well, I'll be jiggered!" he ejaculated. "What on earth put such an idea into your head?"

"I don't know," the Camera Chap replied, with a grin. "It came to me like a flash. I wanted to get his goat, and it seemed to me that would be a good way of going about it. I wasn't wrong, either. He certainly appeared somewhat jarred by my announcement."

"Oh, I see," said Carroll. "It was merely a joke?"

"Not at all," the Camera Chap rejoined. "Now that I've launched your boom, Fred, you've got to run. Just think what a fine thing it would be for the *Bulletin* if its proprietor were the mayor of the town!"

"Nonsense!" Carroll protested. "Don't talk like an idiot, Frank. It's quite out of the question."

It was at this point that Melba suddenly recollected something. "Oh, that reminds me, Fred, of the other piece of news I have to tell you!" she exclaimed. "You know, I said I had two pieces of news to communicate. My uncle announced at the supper table last night that he expects to be the next mayor of Oldham."

"Your uncle!" cried Hawley and Carroll in a chorus of astonishment.

"Yes," he said that Mayor Henkle promised to make him his successor. Mr. Henkle has decided not to be a candidate for reelection, and he thinks that Uncle Delancey's faithful services to the party entitle him to the place. My uncle is tickled pink. He has already made plans of what he is going to do when he gets into the city hall."

The Camera Chap looked at Carroll, and chuckled. There was a flash in the latter's eyes, and his lower jaw was thrust forward aggressively.

"Frank," he cried, "you're a true prophet! I am going to announce my candidacy in the next issue of the *Bulletin*, in the largest type we've got in the shop."

CHAPTER XXX.

A MYSTERY SOLVED.

When the seven o'clock train for New York steamed out of Oldham, Chief of Police Hodgins stood on the station platform. He was there by order of the mayor. He saw Hawley get on the train, and, after waiting until the train was under way, to make sure that the Camera Chap did not get off again, he went to the city hall to report to his honor.

Mayor Henkle was bitterly disappointed. Until the last minute he had been hopeful that the Camera Chap would fall for the lure of that hundred-dollar bill. In fact, he had stayed at the city hall long after his usual hour in expectation that Hawley would return to make that much-desired affidavit.

The mayor was greatly disappointed, too, because Carroll did not come over to the city hall to shake hands with him and accept his terms of peace. Had the proprietor of the *Bulletin* responded to his overtures, the Honorable Martin Henkle had in mind a nifty little plan, which, when put in operation, would have come as a great shock to that editor. In fact, his honor had intended to hand Carroll a nice juicy lemon. He had no more intention of making friends with the *Bulletin* than he had of making friends with his neighbor's cat—and the mayor hated cats.

His idea was to beguile Carroll and Hawley into confessing that those police snapshots were fakes; then, as soon as that humiliating confession was published in the *Bulletin*, he intended to declare war once more on that newspaper. He figured that Carroll would be so discredited in the eyes of the public that he would have nothing more to fear from him or his newspaper. Therefore, the Honorable Martin Henkle was exceedingly chagrined that neither Hawley nor Carroll had fallen for his little game.

Still, he derived some satisfaction from Chief Hodgins' report that the Camera Chap had left town on the seven o'clock train for New York. He realized that had the Camera Chap refused to go voluntarily he would have had no legal right to force him to leave Oldham. In that event, he would have had to carry out his threat to send Hawley to jail, for he was determined to get rid of him; but he was strongly opposed to taking that step, for fear of the adverse public sentiment which it was likely to arouse.

With the Camera Chap out of the way, the mayor felt confident that he would soon be able to put the *Bulletin* out of business. The sudden spurt of success displayed by Carroll's newspaper he attributed entirely to the aid which Hawley had given with his camera. Now that the Camera Chap had gone back to New York, the *Bulletin's* circulation would soon dwindle.

Possibly his honor would not have felt so confident if he had overheard Hawley's words as he took leave of his friend Carroll.

"I have promised to leave on the seven o'clock train," the Camera Chap said, with a smile, "and, of course, I shall keep that promise. I have some business to attend to in New York, anyway, Fred, so the time consumed by the trip will not be wasted."

"But," he added, with a chuckle, "I have not promised my friend the mayor that I would not come back. Very careless of him to overlook that point, wasn't it? I shall stop in New York only a few hours; then I shall return to resume my job as staff photographer of the *Bulletin*."

As it turned out, the Camera Chap had cause to feel very grateful to Mayor Henkle for sending him back to New York on the seven o'clock train. For on that train he made the acquaintance of a man who was a friend of the younger Gale. As a result of this, Hawley was enabled to solve the mystery of Gale's sudden desire to marry his Cousin Melba.

His meeting with this man was not quite accidental, although the Camera Chap took pains to make it appear so. It came about in this manner: Just as the train was about to pull out of the station, two men came down the platform and stopped at the coach in which Hawley sat. One was Gale. The other was a tall blond man, whose face was exceedingly flushed, and who walked somewhat unsteadily. The Camera Chap's attention was attracted to the pair by the voice of Gale's companion, which was pitched far above its normal register. He was taking leave of Gale, who evidently had come there merely to see him off.

"Well, s'long, old scout!" he shouted, shaking Gale's hand vigorously. "See yer again next time I hit this little old town. Hope by that time you'll be married to——"

He didn't finish the sentence, for Gale hastily cut him short by saying something to him in a tone so low that Hawley could not catch the words. Then Gale and a guard assisted the wabbly young man aboard the coach, and the train started.

The Camera Chap had heard enough to cause him to desire to learn more. The sentence which had been cut short so abruptly caused him to think of what Melba Gale had told him regarding her cousin's proposal. He wondered if it was to her that the man with the flushed face had been about to refer when Gale checked his noisy speech. Determined to find this out, if possible, he decided to become acquainted with Gale's friend.

The latter had taken a seat at the other end of the coach. Hawley waited until the train had been under way a short time, then changed his seat for one beside that of the man, taking care not to betray any special interest in his neighbor.

The latter stared at him for a while; then, being in a conversational mood, he began to talk.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "Where'd you get on the train?"

Hawley answered that he had got on at Oldham.

"Oldham? Tha's funny. Tha's where I got on myself," the man with the flushed face exclaimed, as excited as though this coincidence were the most amazing thing that

had ever happened. "Great little old town, isn't it? Know anybody there?"

"A few people."

"Happen to know my frien' Gale?"

"Do I?" exclaimed Hawley in a tone which implied that he and Gale had shared the same feeding bottle as infants.

"Tha's funny—tha's awful funny. Gale's great frien' mine, too. Shake hands! Any frien' of a frien' of mine is a frien' of mine, too. So you know good old Gale, eh?"

"Oh, sure," Hawley responded, with an enthusiasm that was well feigned. "By the way, old man, I suppose you've heard that he's going to be married?"

The man with the flushed face looked at him in astonishment. "I thought it was a secret."

The Camera Chap laughed noncommittally. "Nice girl, isn't she?" he said lightly.

"Nice? She's regular peach!" The man winked at Hawley. "And rich, too—that's more important than being nice. My frien' Gale's lucky fellow."

The Camera Chap was amazed to hear this. Evidently, then, the girl to whom his talkative neighbor referred was not Melba. But the other's next utterance caused him to change his mind.

"Don't see any reason why he shouldn't marry her, if she is his cousin," the man exclaimed. "Nothing wrong in cousins marrying—especially when girl's so rich."

Hawley's face was a complete mask to his emotions.

"Yes, I guess she's rich, all right," he remarked casually. "Let's see; how much do they say she's worth?"

The young man looked at him in amazement. "Watcher talkin' about? She ain't worth anything now, of course. She won't get the money until old Leggett's death. Guess you mean how much is she mentioned for in the will, eh?"

"Sure," the Camera Chap assented. "That's exactly what I meant."

"Well, tha's funny—tha's awful funny!" the man muttered, regarding Hawley with sudden suspicion. "How the deuce do you know anything about that will? I thought I was the only one who was wise to it—and I haven't told anybody in Oldham a word about it, 'cept my friend Gale. Old Sam Leggett's got her down in his will for fifty thousand dollars. Pretty soft for our friend Gale, eh?"

Hawley had difficulty in concealing his astonishment. So Fred Carroll's fiancée, instead of being a penniless orphan, was really an heiress. Here was good news, indeed. The Camera Chap was glad that he had set out on this trip to New York. He had already learned enough to enable him to understand Gale's motive for suddenly desiring to marry his cousin. But there were several things he still wanted to know. By adroit questioning, he succeeded in eliciting these details from his babbling acquaintance.

Samuel Leggett, a New York merchant, he learned, was a distant relative of Melba Gale on her mother's side. The old man was worth millions, and, having no near kin, had made a will leaving most of his money to various charities and institutions in which he was interested. Remembering the existence of his young kinswoman, however, he had mentioned her in his will to the extent of fifty thousand dollars. It was a small amount compared with some of the other bequests, but old Leggett had not been on particularly good terms with that branch of the family from which Melba was descended; otherwise she would have been heiress to millions instead of thousands.

Fifty thousand dollars, however, was a big enough fortune to appeal to the cupidity of old Delancey Gale and his son. They had learned about his legacy from the man with the flushed face, who was a clerk in the office of the lawyer who had drawn up Leggett's will, and who had thus had a chance to see that document.

Happening to be in Oldham on some business for his employer, this man had called on his friend Gale, whom he had known when the latter was a reporter on the New York *Daily News*, and had told him of Melba's prospective good fortune.

Gale had been greatly interested, and had urged him not to talk about the will to his Cousin Melba, nor to anybody else in Oldham. Gale had confided to him that he and Melba were secretly engaged—so the garrulous law clerk informed the Camera Chap—and had explained with seeming ingenuousness that if the girl learned that she was an heiress to fifty thousand dollars she might get an idea into her head that he—Gale—was not good enough for her.

"Modest fellow, our friend Gale, isn't he?" remarked the law clerk to Hawley, at this point in the narrative.

"Oh, very!" the Camera Chap agreed dryly. "Just one more question, old man: Is Mr. Leggett in good health?"

The law clerk grinned. "You bet he is! He's as hard as nails, and, although he's past seventy, is as spry as a man of forty. Comes of a long-lived family, too, I understand. His father was nearly ninety before he cashed in. Poor Gale may have to wait a long time, after all, before he gets his hands on that money."

"I've an idea that he'll have to wait a very long time," the Camera Chap answered grimly.

CHAPTER XXXI.

RISING FORTUNES.

A day after the arrival of the Camera Chap in New York, a middle-aged man of exceedingly prosperous appearance entered the *Bulletin* office, and handed a card to Fred Carroll, on which was printed:

"Mr. Oliver Cheston, the National Advertising Agency, New York, Chicago, San Francisco."

Carroll wondered that a man of Mr. Cheston's evident standing in the business world should have such a cheap-looking card, for the pasteboard was printed instead of being engraved, and it looked as if the job had been hastily done, some of the letters being blurred.

Nevertheless, the proprietor of the *Bulletin* received his visitor with great politeness. He was enough of a philosopher to realize that a man is not always to be judged by the quality of his stationery.

Mr. Oliver Cheston's first words took Carroll's breath away.

"I have come to see you about placing some advertising in your newspaper," he announced quietly; "about five thousand dollars' worth."

"Five thousand dollars' worth!" the proprietor of the *Bulletin* gasped. "Is this a joke?"

The representative of the National Advertising Agency frowned. "Why should you doubt my seriousness, sir?"

he demanded, with great dignity. "My firm is one of the largest agencies in the world. Surely you must have heard of us? We represent most of the big advertisers in the United States, and our specialty is placing ads in small-town newspapers such as yours."

He drew from his pocket several sheets of paper pinned together. "Here is the copy of the ads which I wish to insert in the *Bulletin*. They are to appear regularly in each issue until further notice. Each ad is to occupy half a page. If you will have the contracts drawn up, I will sign them now."

Carroll glanced at the pages which his visitor had thrust into his hand. Each sheet was a typewritten draft of an advertisement of some product of world-wide reputation. One was a brand of bottled beer, which, so its manufacturers boasted, had made a certain town famous; another was a breakfast food, the name of which, by dint of persistent advertising, had become a household word throughout the world; a third was a tooth powder which millions of people were using.

Still Carroll was incredulous. This stroke of fortune seemed much too good to be true. He was strongly inclined to ask Mr. Cheston why he had selected the *Bulletin* as a medium for this advertising, but he realized that such a question would be exceedingly undiplomatic, so he refrained from putting it.

"Very well, sir," he said. "How about payment? It is——"

Before he could go any further, the representative of the National Advertising Agency broke in:

"Payment will be in advance, Mr. Carroll. I shall hand you our check now for five thousand dollars. That will carry us for quite a few issues at your usual rates, I think. By the time that money is used up, we shall be able to judge by the results whether it will be to our advantage to continue to run the ads in the *Bulletin*."

Carroll was even more strongly inclined to suspect now that the proposition was a hoax. This liberal way of doing business, to his mind, looked decidedly fishy.

However, he proceeded to draw up the contracts, and when Mr. Cheston had departed, leaving a check for five thousand dollars behind him, he took the check over to his bank, although he felt so sure that it was worthless that he was almost ashamed to deposit it.

Great was his amazement and joy when he called at the bank the next day, and was told by the cashier that the check had put through the clearing house, and was perfectly good.

It was not long before Carroll's enemies in the *Chronicle* office and at the city hall heard about this windfall which had come to the *Bulletin*.

The Gales could not understand it at all. They thought it very queer that Mr. Oliver Cheston had not come to them with a view to placing his business in their newspaper. Surely as an advertising expert, he must have known that the *Chronicle's* circulation was far in advance of that of the *Bulletin*.

It worried them, and it worried Mayor Henkle, too, to see Carroll get that five thousand dollars. They had figured on his lack of finances as the strongest factor in the downfall of the *Bulletin*. Now that he had so unexpectedly come into funds, they realized that his newspaper would have a new lease of life, which, from their standpoint, was very annoying.

What worried the Gales and the Honorable Martin Henkle even more was the manner in which Carroll's announcement that he would be a candidate for mayor at the next election had been received by the people of Oldham.

Carroll had published that announcement in large type on the front page of the *Bulletin*. In a ringing editorial, double-leaded, and three columns wide, he explained his reasons for taking this step, and urged the taxpayers of Oldham to rally to his standard, and help in the good work of turning the rascals out of office.

On the front page of that issue, and each succeeding issue, was printed a coupon, which the reader was requested to fill out and bring or mail to the *Bulletin* office. By signing this coupon, the reader enrolled himself as a member of the new "People's Party."

The response to this appeal was very gratifying—to Carroll and his friends. The coupons, properly filled out, came pouring into the *Bulletin* office. Committees of taxpayers called in person to congratulate Carroll upon his decision to run for mayor, and to pledge their enthusiastic support.

Day by day the *Bulletin's* circulation grew larger and larger. Carroll's editorials on the subject of his candidacy were the most brilliant his pen had ever turned out. Lots of people bought the *Bulletin* just to read his roasts of the Honorable Martin Henkle and his gang. Many others bought the paper because of the spirited snapshots which appeared each day upon its front page. For the Camera Chap had come back to Oldham, as he had promised to do, and was once more busy with his kodak and in dodging Chief of Police Hodgins and his minions.

It was this fact which worried Mayor Henkle and the Gales most of all, for they soon learned that Hawley had returned, and was responsible for the daring half tones which the *Bulletin* was publishing, and which were causing so much amusement in Oldham.

Then one day, about a week after the Camera Chap's return from New York, old Delancey Gale and his son received another great shock. An Associated Press dispatch from New York came to the *Chronicle* office, announcing the death of Mr. Samuel Leggett, a prominent merchant and philanthropist.

"I guess it's all up now, governor," said the younger Gale moorsely to his father. "Melba will come into that fifty thousand dollars, and she'll marry Carroll right away—confound him! With all that money to spend, he's sure to beat you at the polls at the coming election."

Old Delancey Gale nodded gloomily. "Yes, my son, it certainly looks bad," he admitted. "It seems to me that the situation calls for desperate measure. I have set my heart on being the mayor of this town, and I am not going to let that young ruffian beat me if there is any way of preventing it."

For a full hour, father and son sat in the former's private office, putting their heads together in search of some plan which would bring about the undoing of Carroll.

Suddenly the younger Gale had an inspiration. He explained the scheme to his parent, who gave it his enthusiastic approval. They determined to put it into operation immediately.

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Smallest Knife in the World.

What is in all probability the smallest knife in the world has just been completed by M. A. Kaufman, an employee of a jewelry store of Altoona, Pa. It measures five-thirty-seconds of an inch long, has a blade less than two-sixteenths of an inch in length, and weighs a third of a grain. The handle is of solid gold, while the blade and spring are of tempered steel.

Recalls Indian Battle Back in Summer of '65.

George L. Wilcox, O. O. Ferbrache, and others are locating the long-forgotten, neglected, and obliterated graves of Captain William D. Fouts and his men, Philip G. Alden, Edward McMahan, and Richard Gregor, who lost their lives a half century ago in the battle of Horse Creek, fought near Scottsbluff, Neb.

The work is undertaken under orders from Captain Ray B. Harper, of the quartermaster's corps of Omaha, and the remains are to be sealed in lead caskets and removed to the military cemetery at Cottonwood Cañon, a little east of North Platte.

The graves now lie under a field of alfalfa about four miles west of the city of Scottsbluff, close by the old ruin of Fort Mitchell. This fort was first built by Bruce Husband, of the American Fur Company, and was named Fort Fontenelle, but was later named Fort Mitchell, after General Mitchell. At the time of the interment of Captain Fouts and his companions, it was called Camp Shuman, and was a substation of Fort Laramie.

It would be impossible to find these graves now, were it not for the memory of old-timers, who, thirty years ago, came into the valley, riding the range, or looking for homesteads.

During the winter of 1864-5 there were around Fort Laramie about 2,000 Indians, who professed to be friendly, and said that the war tribes had made it dangerous for them to pursue their usual vocation of hunting and trapping. Under orders they were fed and sustained through the cold winter, but the officials at the fort had good reason to believe that there were a number that were carrying word to the war braves. Every movement of the soldiers seemed to be transmitted almost instantly into the enemy's camp.

It was therefore deemed advisable to remove the friendlies from this central scene of hostilities, and consequently, on July 11, 1865, a company of 135 soldiers, under Captain Fouts, were commissioned to act as an escort for the friendlies, who, in the number of 15,000, including squaws and papooses, were inclined to go. They were to be taken to Julesburg, and part of them to Kearney.

Captain Fouts proceeded carefully down the river on the south side, and, lest a nervous finger should press a trigger prematurely, most of the guns were unloaded. There was nothing of a suspicious note occurring except occasionally signal fires on the hills bordering the Rawhide and Sheep Creek, and occasionally a fire arrow lost itself in the dark vault of the sky.

These weird manifestations of an undercurrent of hostility was naturally trying to the nerves of the families of Captain Fouts and Lieutenant Triggs, which accompanied the party, and especially so because Mrs. Eubanks and daughter, and Miss Laura Roper, recently captured from the Indians, and whose six months in captivity had familiarized them somewhat with Indian signs and their meaning, expressed grave apprehension.

On the night of June 13th, they went into camp on Horse Creek, the Indians on the west side and the soldiers on the east side of the creek. The Indians proceeded to give a dog feast, and the officers were unable to discover what was in the air.

Three hundred and eighty warriors went into council, and the outcome was a tremendous fury at certain of the white soldiers who had taken young Sioux squaws into their tents and kept them there for hours.

On the morning of the fourteenth the advance guard started with the wagons at five o'clock, the intention being to cover the eighteen miles to Camp Shuman, where they would camp in the luscious meadows adjacent and near by. The wagons were strung out for a mile or more when rapid firing was heard in the rear. Captain Fouts' zeal for peace was the direct cause of his death.

The delay incident to loading and distributing ammunition gave the Indians an advantage. The captain had gone back across Horse Creek to hurry the Indians, and they had killed, stripped, and mutilated him, and had fled three miles toward the river and were making warlike demonstrations, while the squaws and papooses were crossing the river, riding, or swimming beside their swimming ponies.

The rear guard had at first run toward the front, but the front guard met them halfway, and together they charged after the Indians. When near at hand, Charles Elston was sent forward to offer those who would accept it and come forward peacefully, immunity from punishment. They met his offer with a shrick of defiance and charged furiously.

The Indians numbered more than five hundred warriors, and, when at a distance of about three hundred yards, they commenced firing, and it was answered in telling effect by the military. While those in front were checked by the fire of the Gallagher rifles, both flanks of the Indians advanced as if to hem them in and cut them off.

Over the hills from the west side of Horse Creek poured dozens and hundreds of the shrieking demons, and an orderly retreat was taken to the wagons, which, in the meantime, had been drawn up in a defensive circle, and hastily constructed rifle pits made.

The Indians then ceased their firing and withdrew. Seeing that they were indisposed to press their attack while the soldiers were behind defenses, and wishing to keep them engaged and at hand until reënforcements came, the officers in charge took fifty of the best mounted men and sallied out.

When out about three miles they saw a large force of Indians coming around the hills on the west side

of Horse Creek with the evident intention of cutting them off. Again the military retired to their intrenchments.

About nine o'clock Captain Shuman arrived with a force from Camp Shuman or Fort Mitchell, and, thus reenforced, another attack was made upon the Indians, but it was a little late. The squaws and papooses had all succeeded in crossing the river, and the warriors had followed.

The military could not follow, for it would be impractical, and perhaps impossible to cross the river at its high stage, in the face of a superior number of Indians.

A message had been sent to Fort Laramie, and Colonel Moonlight, well known for his recent summary execution of three renegade Indians, had started from the fort with two hundred and forty well-mounted men, when he met another courier with the information that the Indians had crossed the river, whereupon he crossed at the fort and took up the pursuit.

This constitutes another story, and the finish of the battle of Horse Creek, the dead being the four named in the beginning of this article, and four others were wounded. The dead were taken to Camp Shuman, the ruins of which are still distinguishable, about three hundred feet south of the west end of the Platte River Bridge, west of this city. And out southwest thereof about a quarter of a mile they were laid to rest, and there have rested for this half a century ending the middle of June. And now, from their obliterated graves, they will be removed to join their fellows, the other early guardians of the great Overland Trail, in the cemetery set aside for their honor by the national government.

Finds War Signs on Wheat and Oat Leaves.

The report in some papers that the letter W appears on wheat leaves this year and the letter B on oat leaves has set some of the farmers in the vicinity of Charlotte, Mich., to investigating. The result is that oat leaves have been found on which the letter B does seem to be quite visible, but the wheat leaves are too ripe and shriveled by rust to give an exhibit of the letter W.

It is claimed by some of the older residents that these letters appeared on the wheat and oat leaves in 1860, the year before the breaking out of the great Civil War, and they believe they indicate now a "bloody war," in which the United States will be engaged.

These letters, it is averred, have never appeared preceding a small war, such as the Spanish-American War.

Another interpretation of these letters has been advanced to the effect they indicate that Wilson and Bryan will be contestants for the nomination for president in 1916.

This Dog is a Fire Fan.

Assistant Fire Chief Tom Davis, of Sharon, Pa., is the owner of an English bulldog whose sole diversion is running to fires. The faithful animal, now nine years old, has been absent from one alarm during his career, a record probably not equaled by any fireman in the country. The one absent mark credited against him was when he was out of the city.

The dog's name is Peter. Chief Davis obtained him when a puppy. The animal began following his master to fires, and when he was a year old he became such a fire fiend that he didn't even bother to wait for his owner. In the days of the horse-drawn apparatus Pete was always first at the fires. His love of the smoke and flames keeps him in the midst of the blaze while it lasts. Pete is now afflicted with troubles incident to old age. When not answering an alarm, he excites the pity of everybody by the manner in which he painfully moves about. But let the fire bell sound, and the dog is off in a flash, distancing any dog that tries to keep after him.

And if an alarm should be sounded at night, Pete goes to the fire just the same. His owner runs a hotel, but sleep becomes impossible until Pete is released from the building. Chief Davis has on several occasions given orders that the dog is to be kept in the hotel when the bell rings. Docile as a lamb on every other occasion, Pete shows great anger when an effort is made to keep him away from a fire call. If perchance the hotel doors are closed, the visitor who allows Pete to get outside has made himself forever "solid" with the faithful animal. One time when penned in alone, Pete made his way from the building by going through a closed window.

Pete's principal duty in the days of horse-drawn apparatus was to protect the horses from annoyance by strange dogs. And he always performed the duty faithfully. During the last few years of the horse apparatus the dog population seemed to know Pete's duty, and it was only the puppy who wanted to bark at the horses' heads. The older canines knew better. They had learned by experience that Pete meant business when he started for a dog that happened to be annoying the horses.

The advent of the motor machinery was mourned by no one more than Pete. He was unable to lead the machinery because it traveled so much faster than the horses. Several narrow escapes have taught him to remain on one side of the street. On two occasions the fire truck has felt the tear of the emergency brakes to keep from running down the dog, for he is as dear to the firemen as though he was their own. Age is telling on the animal, and he generally returns from an alarm riding on the machine. He remains at the department until the machinery is cleaned up and ready for another alarm, and then he makes his way painfully to his home.

Some years ago the fire bell began ringing at seven a. m. and seven p. m. Pete was fooled a few times, but he soon got wise. The same is true of the curfew bell. To prove the almost human intelligence of the animal, an alarm was sounded one night at nine o'clock. Pete never moved from his favorite chair in the hotel until the bell had tapped more than nine strokes. Then he was off like a flash. On this particular occasion pedestrians who have learned to make a clear path when Pete comes along thought he was on his way to the fire. Pete sent one young man sprawling on the ground by diving between his legs and he frightened a woman half to death by a leap over her baby carriage which barred his path.

A hitch in the ringing of the bell may send the human fire fiends scurrying in the wrong direction. Not so with Pete. He seems to have a sixth sense, and he gets to the scene by the shortest way possible, many times taking an altogether different course from that of the firemen.

On one particular occasion the firemen were called to Sharpsville, four miles away. No alarm was sounded, and Chief Davis was not aroused, because he is a volunteer and the fire happened at midnight. But Pete sensed that something was wrong. He began barking, and finally jerked the covers from his owner's bed. Davis was at a loss to account for the excitement. Pete kept getting more boisterous and refused to be quieted. Davis pulled on his clothes to let the animal outside. Opening a door, he met a policeman who spoke of the fire. Davis went to the scene in his automobile, and Pete was soon left behind. But the dog wasn't lost. He arrived at the fire as the firemen were prepared to return home. The faithful animal was so weak from his run that he had to be lifted to the truck to be carried home.

Sharon firemen answer an average of seventy-five alarms of fire a year, therefore Chief Davis and all the firemen agree that Pete is entitled to credit for his record. Council has taken recognition of the animal, and he is possibly the only dog in the United States who is exonerated from wearing a license tag.

Motor Trucks Used on Mail Routes.

Motor trucks are fast taking the place of wagon stages on the inland mail lines in the sparsely settled districts of the Northwest where there are villages still distant fifty, seventy-five, and even one hundred miles from the railroad. The drivers of the trucks in making their trips over the lonely prairies—miles from towns—have a variety of experiences, as does also Uncle Sam's mail.

Sixteen pouches of mail, including several sacks of women's hats, lay out on the prairie during the night following the burning of the truck that carries the mail between Williston, N. D., and Watford, a distance of forty-five miles.

It was past midnight, the car was ten miles out of Watford, and the mail ten hours overdue, when, in cranking up, the engine fired back and the car caught fire. The mail was barely saved.

The driver walked in ten miles, carrying the locked pouch of registered mail and leaving the rest on the prairie for the night.

This Lake is Abode of Evil Spirits.

The most singular body of water in the United States is that of a small lake in the western portion of the State of Washington, known by the Chinook Indians as "Nao Skookum"—meaning "no good." To the inhabitants of the Indian villages this lake is a great mystery as well as a source of great fear, for they believe the underground crevices that feed the lake are full of "evil spirits."

The lake covers perhaps fifty acres of ground, and fish and waterfowl are more than plentiful—for about nine months of the year. North of the lake towers Mount Olympus, of the Olympic range, while to the south and west are the coast range of great hills.

In western Washington the "rainy season" usually lasts something like nine months, and a week or so after the rain sets in, "Nao Skookum" Lake grows very much in circumference and in depth, but, after a week's dry weather, its waters vanish, taking with them the fish and, so the Chinooks declare, the waterfowl, too. When the rain stops, all the Indians in the neighborhood gather on the shore of the lake in order to get as much fish as possible while there is yet time.

Hour after hour the waters sink lower and lower, until the last of it drains down the great holes and crevices at the bottom of the lake. Underground openings of immeasurable length, and as yet untraced by human eye, take the water from the lake, till what was once the bottom of a deep body of water is open to the sky. Then and there the superstitious Indians desert the vicinity of the lake, nor will they again go near it until the rain again comes and the waters return with a rush and fill almost to overflowing what scientists claim was once the crater of a volcano. When it is empty, the Indians declare that thunderous roars and groans issue from the great crevices in the lake's bottom, and they will not venture near it, for "it is the voice of the evil spirits," they declare.

They again return to fish when the rain sets in and the waters surge quickly up the subterranean openings, throwing up fish and great waves and—so the ignorant Indians claim—the waterfowl. In from thirty to forty hours, where had been a great bed of mud, all is deep water, and the lake of Nao Skookum is again sparkling in the sunlight.

Scientists explain this most singular occurrence by stating that the lake is connected by means of its underground openings with great bodies of water, some on a higher level, under the great, snow-capped peaks of the mountain ranges near by, others on a lower level than itself, and that the ducks and other waterfowl come and go from the Pacific and Puget Sound. But no one can convince a Chinook of anything but that they are thrown up with the fish and the rushing waters.

American Munitions Small Potatoes.

"In my judgment, less than one million charges of artillery ammunition has been sent from this country to all the belligerents in Europe since the war broke out. This would not run any single army in Europe through a two days' battle in which one thousand guns were used."

This statement was made here by one of the best ordnance experts in the United States. He had before him the official figures of the department of commerce on exports of cartridges, gunpowder, and high explosives covering the eleven months of commerce up to June 1st. He declared that, in his opinion, not all of this ammunition has yet reached the front in Europe, for the reason that the belligerents themselves have been making their own supply and gathering a reserve wherever they could find it, instead of sending ammunition manufactured outside of their own country directly to the front. The reason for this is that artillery ammunition is not assembled when shipped, and has to be loaded and adjusted on arrival abroad, before it can be sent to the front.

Officials in Washington do not hesitate to say that much of the controversy over the question of shipments of war munitions to Europe comes from newspaper publications of large orders for arms and ammunition which are being placed in this country for future delivery. In many cases it is necessary for the American manufacturers to erect a brand-new plant to produce the goods, and in practically all such instances delivery is months, if not a year, away.

The Nick Carter Stories

ISSUED EVERY SATURDAY — BEAUTIFUL COLORED COVERS

When it comes to detective stories worth while, the **Nick Carter Stories** contain the only ones that should be considered. They are not overdrawn tales of bloodshed. They rather show the working of one of the finest minds ever conceived by a writer. The name of Nick Carter is familiar all over the world, for the stories of his adventures may be read in twenty languages. No other stories have withstood the severe test of time so well as those contained in the **Nick Carter Stories.** It proves conclusively that they are the best. We give herewith a list of some of the back numbers in print. You can have your news dealer order them, or they will be sent direct by the publishers to any address upon receipt of the price in money or postage stamps.

730—The Torn Card.
731—Under Desperation's Spur.
732—The Connecting Link.
733—The Abduction Syndicate.
738—A Plot Within a Plot.
739—The Dead Accomplice.
746—The Secret Entrance.
747—The Cavern Mystery.
748—The Disappearing Fortune.
749—A Voice from the Past.
752—The Spider's Web.
753—The Man With a Crutch.
754—The Rajah's Regalia.
755—Saved from Death.
756—The Man Inside.
757—Out for Vengeance.
758—The Poisons of Exile.
759—The Antique Vial.
760—The House of Slumber.
761—A Double Identity.
762—"The Mocker's" Stratagem.
763—The Man that Came Back.
764—The Tracks in the Snow.
765—The Babbington Case.
766—The Masters of Millions.
767—The Blue Stain.
768—The Lost Clew.
770—The Turn of a Card.
771—A Message in the Dust.
772—A Royal Flush.
774—The Great Buddha Beryl.
775—The Vanishing Heiress.
776—The Unfinished Letter.
777—A Difficult Trail.
782—A Woman's Stratagem.
783—The Cliff Castle Affair.
784—The Prisoner of the Tomb.
785—A Resourceful Foe.
789—The Great Hotel Tragedies.
795—Zanoni, the Transfigured.
796—The Lure of Gold.
797—The Man With a Chest.
798—A Shadowed Life.
799—The Secret Agent.
800—A Plot for a Crown.
801—The Red Heron.
802—Up Against It.
803—The Gold Certificate.
804—Jack Wise's Hurry Call.
805—Nick Carter's Ocean Chase.
807—Nick Carter's Advertisement.
808—The Kregoff Necklace.
811—Nick Carter and the Nihilists.
812—Nick Carter and the Convict Gang.
813—Nick Carter and the Guilty Governor.
814—The Triangled Coin.
815—Ninety-nine—and One.
816—Coin Number 77.

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1—The Man from Nowhere.
2—The Face at the Window.
3—A Flight for a Million.
4—Nick Carter's Land Office.
5—Nick Carter and the Professor.
6—Nick Carter as a Mill Hand.
7—A Single Clew.
8—The Emerald Snake.
9—The Currie Outfit.
10—Nick Carter and the Kidnaped Heiress.
11—Nick Carter Strikes Oil.
12—Nick Carter's Hunt for a Treasure.
13—A Mystery of the Highway.
14—The Silent Passenger.
15—Jack Dreen's Secret.
16—Nick Carter's Pipe Line Case.
17—Nick Carter and the Gold Thieves.
18—Nick Carter's Auto Chase.
19—The Corrigan Inheritance.
20—The Keen Eye of Denton.
21—The Queer's Parlor.
22—Nick Carter's Quick Guess.
23—Nick Carter and the Murderess.
24—Nick Carter and the Pay Car.
25—The Stolen Antique.
26—The Crook League.
27—An English Cracksman.
28—Nick Carter's Still Hunt.
29—Nick Carter's Electric Shock.
30—Nick Carter and the Stolen Duchess.
31—The Purple Spot.
32—The Stolen Groom.
33—The Inverted Cross.
34—Nick Carter and Keno McCall.
35—Nick Carter's Death Trap.
36—Nick Carter's Siamese Puzzle.
37—The Man Outside.
38—The Death Chamber.
39—The Wind and the Wire.
40—Nick Carter's Three Cornered Chase.
41—Dazaar, the Arch-Fiend.
42—The Queen of the Seven.
43—Crossed Wires.
44—A Crimson Clew.
45—The Third Man.
46—The Sign of the Dagger.
47—The Devil's Wallpers.
48—The Cross of Daggers.
49—At Risk of Life.
50—The Deeper Game.
51—The Code Message.
52—The Last of the Seven.
53—Ten-Ichi, the Wonderful.
54—The Secret Order of Associated Crooks.
55—The Golden Hair Clew.
56—Back From the Dead.
57—Through Dark Ways.
58—Which Aces Were Trumps.
59—The Gambler's Last Hand.
60—The Murder at Linden Falls.
61—A Game for Millions.
62—Under Cover.
63—The Last Call.
64—Mercedes Danton's Double.
65—The Millionaire's Nemesis.
66—A Princess of the Underworld.
67—The Crook's Blind.
68—The Fatal Hour.
69—Blood Money.
70—A Queen of Her Kind.
71—Isabel Darrow's Trump Card.
72—A Princess of Hades.
73—A Prince of Plotters.
74—The Crook's Double.
75—For Life and Honor.
76—A Compact With Dazaar.
77—In the Shadow of Dazaar.
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